

Vaccine Scheduling FAQs

Can I schedule over the phone?

Unfortunately, at this time, the Health Department does not have the capability to schedule vaccine appointments over the phone. Once that capability becomes available, the Health Department will publicize the phone number.

If you do not have access to a computer or the internet, you can ask for help from friends or family to make an appointment online.

Can someone help me make my appointment over the phone?

Unfortunately, at this time, the Health Department does not have available staff to assist over the phone with scheduling appointments. Once that capability becomes available, the Health Department will publicize a phone number for people to call.

If you do not have access to a computer or the internet, you can ask for help from friends or family to make an appointment online.

I entered my information into PrepMod and was taken to a page with time slots. However no time slots were available? What happened? Do I have an appointment?

The screen to select an appointment time is the last phase of the registration process. If you arrived at that screen and no appointment slots are available, that means that the clinic is fully booked for the day. In order to successfully schedule an appointment, a slot must be available on that screen. You will receive a confirmation email to the address you provided during registration if you successfully made an appointment. To be notified when new clinic dates are available, please sign up for the “COVID-19 Vaccine Information” subscription in Allegheny Alerts at www.alleghenycounty.us/alerts

Why do the links take me to the state guide?

Appointments are extremely limited at this time.

If there are no slots available for a given day, users will be taken to the PA DOH’s Getting the COVID Vaccine guide. This guide contains an eligibility quiz and a map to help individuals locate a vaccine provider. There are other vaccine providers available in the county, including the Health Department.

Users may try to find an appointment at the Monroeville POD on another day and may check back often to see if an appointment becomes available. If someone cancels a scheduled appointment, their appointment will be made available. If users cannot keep a vaccination appointment, please cancel or reschedule in order to provide the appointment to someone else.

Why isn't the DoubleTree in Monroeville listed on the state vaccine provider map?

The state's vaccine provider map lists organizations that have been approved to provide the vaccine, it does not necessarily show points of dispensing (POD). The Allegheny County Health Department is the vaccine provider for the Monroeville POD.

When can people under 65 with specific health conditions be vaccinated at the Monroeville POD?

Due to limited supply of vaccine, at this time the Health Department is only able to vaccinate those 65 and over at its Monroeville clinic. For now, the Health Department is currently unable to provide vaccines to those 16 to 64 with specific health conditions. Until supply increases, individuals in that category are encouraged to speak with their primary care provider about other options to receive a vaccine. To be notified when new clinic dates are available, please sign up for the "COVID-19 Vaccine Information" subscription in Allegheny Alerts at www.alleghenycounty.us/alerts

When will new clinic dates be available?

The Health Department opens new clinic dates based on the allocation of vaccine it receives from the state. At any time, these dates and times will be extremely limited due to the high demand and limited supply. To be notified when new clinic dates are available, please sign up for the "COVID-19 Vaccine Information" subscription in Allegheny Alerts at www.alleghenycounty.us/alerts

Can you tell me if I, or my employees, qualify for priority phases (Phase 1A, 1B or 1C) in the current vaccination plan?

Individuals and employers are encouraged to review information about the vaccine phases and consult with their healthcare or health insurance providers to determine if they meet the criteria for a priority phase of the current vaccination plan. The Pennsylvania Department of Health has information available on its vaccine page, as does the Allegheny County Health Department, which also has links to information from the CDC.

Additionally, the Pennsylvania Department of Health has a Vaccine Eligibility Quiz online for individuals to determine if they are eligible for the vaccine in 1A.

Federal and state criteria for the vaccine phases has evolved over time. Please sign up for the "COVID-19 Vaccine Information" subscription through Allegheny Alerts (www.alleghenycounty.us/alerts) to receive the latest information on Allegheny County's vaccination plan.

How can I register for a vaccine?

There is no central registration system for the state or Allegheny County at this time. Vaccine providers are using their own registration system to distribute their allotments of vaccine from the state.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health has developed a guide for people to use to determine if they are eligible to receive the vaccine under the expanded Phase 1A criteria and a map to help people find a vaccine provider near them. It is available on the PA-DOH's Vaccine Page.

Please note, the supply of vaccines is extremely limited in Allegheny County while demand is extremely high. It may be difficult to find a vaccine provider using the state's guide and map at this time. If you have questions about the vaccination process in Pennsylvania, please call the Pennsylvania Department of Health hotline at 1-877-724-3258.

There are many vaccination providers in Allegheny County, including hospitals, pharmacies, federally qualified health centers, community clinics and the Health Department. Please use the state map or contact your primary care provider or health insurer, or other vaccine provider directly to inquire about their registration process.

The Allegheny County Health Department has begun offering vaccine appointments to those 65 and over at its Monroeville clinic. Please sign up for the “COVID-19 Vaccine Information” subscription through Allegheny Alerts (www.alleghenycounty.us/alerts) to receive the latest information on vaccination availability at this location.

When will I receive an appointment for my second dose?

The vaccine provider that administered your first dose should notify you of your second dose appointment. When you will be notified will vary based on the vaccine provider.

If you received your first dose through the Allegheny County Health Department, you will receive information regarding your second dose about 10 days before the date of your second dose. The notification will come as information and in a similar fashion as the email about your first dose.

Please note that the Health Department is only able to accommodate second doses to those individuals to whom it provided first doses. It cannot provide second doses to individuals who received their first dose through a different vaccine provider.

What is Allegheny Alerts and how do I sign up?

Allegheny Alerts is a community notification system. Anyone can sign up for a free subscription and can choose what information they receive, and how they receive it – and that includes phone calls to residents who may not have a computer or smart phone. Visit alleghenycounty.us/alerts to sign up.

To sign up:

- Go to www.alleghenycounty.us/alerts
- Sign in if you already have an account or create a new account
- In the top right of the “My Subscriptions” box, click “Edit”
- On the next page, either check the box next to “COVID-19 UPDATES” to receive all COVID-19 updates from Allegheny County or click the triangle to choose only vaccine information.
- If you already receive COVID-19 updates through Allegheny Alerts, you do not need to add the vaccine subscription.

Why are college students and faculty getting vaccinated before nursing home patients?

Nursing home patients and staff are being vaccinated through a federal program that contracted with CVS and Walgreens and now also Rite Aid. The pharmacies are working as fast as they can to vaccinate nursing home patients in phase 1A. Some college students and faculty may have been vaccinated in Phase 1A due to their roles as healthcare workers or due to age.

When will my group be vaccinated? When can I be vaccinated? When can my parents be vaccinated?

The Health Department is currently vaccinating healthcare workers eligible for Phase 1A of the vaccination plan and people 65 and over. As more vaccine becomes available, the Health Department will be able to expand vaccinations to a wider audience.

You can sign up for the latest on the county's vaccination effort by subscribing to "COVID-19 Vaccination Information" under "COVID-19 Updates" in Allegheny Alerts. It's free and available here <https://member.everbridge.net/453003085611110/login>

The Health Department will use Allegheny Alerts to notify individuals of new vaccine appointment availability. Please note that these appointments are extremely limited and fill up very quickly. It is possible that all appointments will be booked when you access the links.

There are many other vaccination providers in Allegheny County. The Pennsylvania Department of Health has developed an online guide for people to use to determine if they are eligible to receive the vaccine under the expanded Phase 1A criteria and a map to people find a vaccine provider near them. The Allegheny County Health Department is not involved with these tools, or the information provided.

Please note, the supply of vaccines is limited in Allegheny County while demand is extremely high. It may be difficult to find a vaccine provider using the state's guide and map at this time. If you have questions about the vaccination process in Pennsylvania, please call the Pennsylvania Department of Health hotline at 1-877-724-3258.

How will I know if I am eligible to receive the vaccine?

The Pennsylvania Department of Health has developed an online guide for people to use to determine if they are eligible to receive the vaccine under the expanded Phase 1A criteria. The Allegheny County Health Department is not involved with these tools, or the information provided.

Is there a waiting list or on-call list I can sign up for?

Allegheny County is using Allegheny Alerts to notify residents when vaccines are available through the county Health Department. More information about Allegheny Alerts is available in this FAQ. You can sign up for the service at www.alleghenycounty.us/alerts

There are many vaccine providers in Allegheny County. Vaccine providers are using their own registration systems. These systems could use a waiting list or on-call list. The Health Department is not involved in the distribution systems of other vaccine providers. The Pennsylvania Department of Health has also made available a map showing vaccine providers.

When will the 1B phase begin? What about the other phases?

The start of Phase 1B will be delayed now that Phase 1A was expanded to include all individuals over 65 and individuals 16 to 64 with specific health conditions. There is no timeline for the start of Phase 1B.

I think I should be in 1A. Is there a way to request to be included in 1A?

Inclusion in Phase 1A is determined by the federal Department of Health and Human Services and the PA DOH. There is not a way to request inclusion in this group at the local level.

I am the lone caretaker for an elderly family member? Can I be included in 1A?

The 1A criteria are set by HHS and PA DOH and do not include family members care for elderly family members.

When will teachers be able to be vaccinated?

Teachers as a group are included in Phase 1B. However, some teachers and school staff may be vaccinated in 1A if they personally meet age or health risk for 1A.

I work closely with the public every day. Why can't I get vaccinated now?

The Health Department is following the vaccination guidelines endorsed by the HHS and the Pennsylvania Department of Health. These guidelines were established to maximize benefits and minimize harms, promote justice, mitigate health inequities, and promote transparency.

Occupations that may put someone at a higher risk of contracting COVID-19 are addressed in phase 1B and 1C of the vaccination plan.

Which vaccine is more effective?

Both the vaccines currently available are highly effective. Pfizer-BioNTech was 95% effective in clinical trials while the Moderna vaccine was 94.1% effective. More information on the trials and outcomes is available on the county, state and FDA websites.

The county is not recommending one over the other.

Do I have to get the same brand vaccine twice or can I get one of each?

You should receive the same brand of vaccine for both doses. Except for rare circumstances, you should not mix and match vaccine brands. At this time, the health department is only administering the Moderna vaccine. If you receive your first vaccine from the health department, you will be contacted to schedule your second dose and will only receive the Moderna vaccine.

Are the vaccines safe?

In the United States, COVID vaccines are currently being approved under emergency use authorizations (EUA) from the FDA before they can be distributed. The EUA is supported by a Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) declaration that circumstances exist to justify the emergency use of drugs and biological products during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To gain EUA approval, the vaccine manufacturers must present data from clinical trials showing that the vaccine is effective and safe based on all data collected to date.

The FDA approved the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine on December 11, 2020, and the Moderna vaccine on December 18, 2020. The data from the clinical trials for these two vaccines support their safety.

Like all vaccine, after getting the COVID-19 vaccine, some people may feel tired and some will experience headache and muscle aches. The side effects are more common after the second dose and more likely in younger, rather than older, vaccine recipients. The side effects can occur up to a week after vaccination but are most likely to occur one or two days after vaccination and last for a day or two. These types of side effects are the result of your immune system responding to the vaccine.

Were the vaccines rushed?

The vaccines were developed quickly but no corners were cut in the development and testing of them. The two COVID-19 vaccine currently available were rapidly developed for several reasons. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are based on novel messenger RNA, or mRNA, technology. Although these are the first approved mRNA vaccine, researchers have been working with mRNA vaccines for 10 years. The technology allows rapid synthesis of clinical-grade vaccines. In fact, within a week after the SARS-CoV-2 sequence was made public, mRNA vaccines were being produced.

The COVID vaccines benefited from huge support from the community in the form of participants who were willing to rapidly enroll into studies that vaccinated 30,000 to 45,000 volunteers per study. Such rapid enrollment is somewhat unprecedented.

They were also given unprecedented financial support that allowed them to be developed quickly without cutting corners.

Will the vaccine make you sick?

When you are exposed to a virus, like the viruses that cause the common cold or influenza, your immune system responds. The symptoms you experience, like body aches, congestion, fever, etc., are caused by your immune's systems response to the virus. Similarly, when you get a vaccine, the goal is to boost your immune system, and when that happens, you get some symptoms of illness.

County Executive Rich Fitzgerald and Health Director Dr. Debra Bogen are both participants in the Moderna vaccine trial. After their second injections, both developed mild symptoms and recovered fully and quickly. For both, that meant they very likely received the vaccine and not the placebo and that their immune system was responding to the vaccine.

According to the FDA, the most common side effects from the Pfizer vaccine are pain, redness or swelling at the injection site, fatigue, headache, chills, muscle pain and joint pain. These symptoms typically last a day or two.

The CDC is tracking severe reactions to the vaccines and reporting them to the public. According to their report in early January 2021, the risk of anaphylaxis (severe allergic reaction) from the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was estimated to be 11 cases per 1 million doses given. Similarly, data from the Moderna Vaccine is a rate of 2.5 per every million doses given MMWR. Although extremely rare, vaccination providers should be prepared to address such emergencies.

Who Should and Should Not Get the Vaccine?

Right now – the Pfizer vaccine is approved for ages 16 and older and the Moderna vaccine is approved for ages 18 and older. Among those who meet age criteria, almost everyone can get the COVID-19 mRNA vaccines, but a few people should not get the vaccine and some others should first consult with their healthcare provider.

Those who should NOT get the vaccine include:

- People with severe allergies to a vaccine ingredient, another vaccine, or any injectable medications. “Severe” means allergies that are severe enough that they cause anaphylaxis, use of an “epi pen” or require medical treatment.
- Those under 16 cannot get either of the mRNA vaccines because studies are not yet completed in children younger than 16 years of age. Those 16- to 18-years of age can get the Pfizer, but not the Moderna, vaccine.

- If someone currently has symptoms of COVID-19 or is [isolating per CDC protocols](#), they should wait until they recover.
- Likewise, if a person recently had COVID-19 and was treated with monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma, they should wait 90 days before getting vaccinated.
- Finally, in most cases if someone is exposed to COVID-19, they should wait until the quarantine period is over. Exceptions to this are people living in group settings (e.g., nursing homes, correctional facilities, or homeless shelters).

For those who are pregnant or breastfeeding, a number of organizations, including the CDC, have put out [guidance for people who are pregnant and lactating](#). Please refer to resources from those organizations for more detail and speak to your healthcare provider.

Does the vaccine give you COVID-19?

No. The vaccine does NOT give you COVID-19. It protects you from getting covid-19. It can cause you to not feel well for a day or two.

I've already had COVID-19. Do I need the vaccine?

People who had COVID-19 have at least three months of protection from reinfection, so if you have recently recovered from COVID-19, you can likely wait to get it. Frontline workers who have not had COVID-19 in the past 3 months may be given priority for the vaccine. However, eventually even those who had COVID-19 should still get the vaccine.

When will it be available for everyone?

The Health Department estimates that it will take at least a couple of months to vaccinate all those who want to be vaccinated in phase 1A due the significant expansion of those who qualify in 1A. When we begin later phases, including Phase 2 which includes the general population, will depend on the supply of vaccine in the country, state and county – but likely not until summer.

Do I need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others once I have been fully vaccinated?

Yes. We are still learning much about the vaccines. Experts need to understand more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide in real-world conditions before making that decision. We also don't yet know whether getting a COVID-19 vaccine will prevent you from spreading the virus that causes COVID-19 to other people, even if you don't get sick yourself.

For now, it is important for everyone to continue to wear masks, stay at least 6 feet from others and frequently wash their hands.

According to the CDC, there is not enough information currently available to say if or when experts will stop recommending masks and physical distancing. Experts need to understand more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide before making that decision.

If I've been vaccinated, do I still need to quarantine if I am exposed to the coronavirus or identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19?

Yes. Because of the limited information on how the vaccine may reduce transmission and how long protection from the vaccine lasts, people who have been vaccinated should continue to current safety precautions, including quarantine guidance.

How many people need to be vaccinated to achieve herd immunity?

Herd immunity means enough people have protection, whether from a previous infection or vaccination, that a virus or bacteria will likely not spread and cause disease. This means that everyone, even people who haven't been sick or can't get the vaccine, is protected. The percentage of people who need to have protection for herd immunity varies by disease. Experts do not know what percentage of people would need to get vaccinated to achieve herd immunity to COVID-19.

How concerned should I be about allergic reactions to the vaccine?

The CDC is tracking severe reactions to the vaccines and reporting them to the public. According to their report in early January 2021, the risk of anaphylaxis (severe allergic reaction) from the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was estimated to be 11 cases per 1 million doses given. Similarly, data from the Moderna Vaccine is a rate of 2.5 per every million doses given. Although extremely rare, vaccination providers should be prepared to address such emergencies.

[The CDC recommends](#) that if you have ever had a severe allergic reaction to any ingredient in a COVID-19 vaccine, you should not get that specific vaccine. If you have had a severe allergic reaction to other vaccines or injectable therapies, you should ask your doctor if you should get a COVID-19 vaccine. Your doctor will help you decide if it is safe for you to get vaccinated.

People with a history of severe allergic reactions not related to vaccines or injectable medications—such as allergies to food, pet, venom, environmental, or latex—may still get vaccinated, according to the CDC. People with a history of allergies to oral medications or a family history of severe allergic reactions, or who might have a milder allergy to vaccines (no anaphylaxis)—may also still get vaccinated.

If you have a severe allergic reaction after getting the first shot, you should not get the second shot. Your doctor may refer you to a specialist in allergies and immunology to provide more care or advice.

I currently have COVID. Can I get the vaccination?

Those currently sick should not get vaccine until they are at least past their isolation period because we want to protect those giving the vaccine and others at the vaccination center. Because there is usually at least three months of protection after infection, you can wait to get the vaccine, but you don't need to wait the three months.

I have symptoms or am sick, can I get the vaccination?

If you are currently sick, please get tested for COVID-19 and stay at home until you get your results.

For most vaccines, we ask those with fever or significant illness wait to get the vaccine until you are feeling better and fever has been gone for at least 24 hours. Waiting allows health care providers to determine if side effects you experience are from the vaccine or from the illness.

Do I need to take a day off after the vaccine?

No, you can continue to work and go about your daily activities after you receive the vaccine. Some people may experience symptoms after receiving the vaccine and may need to take a day off to recover from those symptoms.

Can my children get the vaccine?

Currently the Pfizer vaccine is approved for those 16 years and older. The Moderna vaccine is approved for those 18 years and older. There are currently studies taking place to evaluate these vaccines in children.

What happens if I miss my second shot of the vaccine?

If you miss your second vaccine, you should reschedule as soon as you can. You do not have to repeat the first dose.

Both COVID-19 mRNA vaccines need 2 shots to get the most protection. The timing between your first and second shot depends on which vaccine you received. You should get your second shot:

- for the [Pfizer-BioNTech](#) 3 weeks (or 21 days) after your first shot,
- for the [Moderna](#) 1 month (or 28 days) after your first shot.

You should **get your second shot as close to the recommended 3-week or 4-week interval as possible**. However, there is no maximum interval between the first and second doses for either vaccine. You should not get the second dose earlier than the recommended interval.

Do COVID-19 vaccines include a microchip for tracking?

No. While there is a video circulating on social media that makes that claim, there is no microchip included in the vaccine and nothing at all that would track your location.

I have heard that the COVID-19 vaccination causes infertility and I'm concerned about any such effect. Is that true?

There is no evidence that the vaccination causes infertility. The protein being cited on social media posts about this issue is not contained in the vaccine. The Pfizer-BioNTech Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) by the Food & Drug Administration specifically states that pregnant or breastfeeding women may opt for immunization if they choose. The EUA for Moderna indicates that available data is insufficient to inform vaccine-associated risks. Both vaccines are not “live virus” vaccines but are instead mRNA vaccines.

This new process used to create the COVID-19 vaccinations is mRNA-based. Will it modify my DNA?

No. An mRNA vaccine – also called a Messenger RNA vaccine – does not contain a live virus. Instead, it's a process that mirrors one by cells to make proteins. Those proteins trigger an immune response and build immunity to the virus. Injecting RNA into a person, in the form of the vaccine, doesn't do anything to the DNA of a human cell. The vaccine does not even enter the nucleus of the cell where DNA is located.

I am morally/religiously opposed to receiving a vaccination that was created using aborted fetal tissue. Were these vaccines created in that way?

No. Neither the Pfizer nor the Moderna vaccine use cell lines that originated in fetal tissue taken from the body of an aborted baby at any stage of design, development or production.

Employees at my company are considered essential workers and could be given priority to receive the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available. What should my company be doing now to prepare?

Preparing your company and employers for the COVID-19 vaccine is an important task. The Health Department is currently vaccinating healthcare workers who meet the criteria for Phase 1A.

There is no timeline yet for expanding vaccination to other phases or people, but it is important to be ready. Put together a list of the number of personnel who work for your company, and survey them to determine how many plan to take the vaccine. You may also wish to learn more why about some may be hesitant to receive the shot and address those concerns.

Additional information on the vaccine is available on the ACHD website.

Once the Health Department is ready to share information about vaccinations in Phase 1B and beyond, it will communicate that information on this website, on social media and through [Allegheny Alerts](#).