We know there are a lot of questions about the emerging COVID-19 vaccines. Our goal is to keep you informed as vaccines are approved and rolled out for our workforce, patients and community in the weeks ahead.

We have created a list of common questions about the COVID-19 vaccines based on current knowledge and understanding. These questions will continue to evolve with time, so we encourage you to check back frequently for the most up-to-date information.

Common Questions about COVID-19 Vaccines:

1. **Who is currently eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine? When will it be available to the general public?**

   We are in the process of distributing the vaccine in accordance with prioritization guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the federal government and our state health departments. Vaccine administration has begun with our frontline healthcare workers. As soon as the vaccine becomes more broadly available, we strongly encourage our community to get vaccinated.

2. **The vaccine was produced very quickly. How do I know it is safe?**

   The U.S. vaccine safety system ensures that all vaccines are as safe as possible. Safety is the top priority while federal partners work to make the COVID-19 vaccines. Despite what the name may suggest, "Operation Warp Speed" does not mean that manufacturers were able to skip steps or cut corners in the vaccine development process. Instead, after development of the vaccine, manufacturers took a secured risk and overlapped the study, manufacturing and distribution phases. The FDA committed to giving these vaccinations priority (not rushed) review at all phases of the studies, which helped speed up the overall process. Ongoing monitoring of vaccine effectiveness and side effect reports will continue to be evaluated by the FDA and the manufacturers.

3. **If I get the COVID-19 vaccine, should I still wear a mask?**

   Yes. For several reasons, a mask and other proven methods of preventing COVID-19 (hand hygiene and social distancing) are still important even after receiving the vaccine. It typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination. That means it is possible that a person could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination. This is because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection.

4. **If I have already had COVID-19 and recovered, should I still get the COVID-19 vaccine when it is available?**

   Yes. At this time, the vaccine is recommended even if you previously tested positive for COVID-19. There is not enough information currently available to say if or for how long after infection someone is protected from getting COVID-19 again; this is called natural immunity.

Early evidence suggests natural immunity from COVID-19 may not last very long, but more studies are needed to better understand this. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that re-infection with COVID-19 is possible, people who have had COVID-19 greater than 90 days ago should proceed with getting the vaccine. Due to limited vaccine supply, if you have had COVID-19 within the last 90 days, your likelihood of reinfection is low enough during this time period that you can wait to get the vaccine until you hit the 90-day mark after being sick.

5. Can you contract COVID-19 by getting the vaccine?

No. The vaccine is NOT a live vaccine, and it is NOT possible to contract COVID-19 from receiving the vaccine. Some people experience side effects from the vaccine, such as headache, muscle pain, or fever – but that does not mean you have COVID-19. It means your body is working to build the necessary immunity against the virus, which is a good thing.

6. What are the possible side effects/adverse events from the COVID-19 vaccine?

The most common adverse reactions reported have been fatigue, headache, fever/chills and joint pain. This means your body is working to build the necessary immunity against the virus.

You can read more in Pfizer's FDA Briefing Document about the side effects reported among the vaccine study participants.

7. Can the COVID-19 vaccine be administered to children?

The COVID-19 vaccine is not indicated for children younger than 16 years old at this time.

8. Can the COVID-19 vaccine be administered to pregnant women?

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommends that COVID-19 vaccines should not be withheld from pregnant individuals. It is important to note that the COVID-19 vaccines currently available have not been tested in pregnant women, so there is no safety data specific to use in pregnancy. Pregnant women should make an informed decision after discussing with their healthcare provider.

9. How many doses are required? If multiple, when do I get another dose?

For both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine, two doses are required. The second dose of the Pfizer vaccine should be administered 21 days after the first dose. The second dose of the Moderna vaccine should be administered 28 days after the first dose. It is very important to note that the second dose must be from the same manufacturer as the first dose.

10. What should I do if I am unable to get the second dose exactly 21 days (Pfizer) or 28 days (Moderna) after the first dose?

While it is recommended that you receive the second dose as soon as feasible after day 21 or day 28, we understand that it might not be possible to receive it on the desired date. This could be due to multiple reasons. Please keep the following in mind if you cannot receive the second vaccine dose on the desired date:

1. You must receive the second dose from the same manufacturer as the first dose.
2. Get the second dose as soon as possible after the desired date has passed, as it is better to get the second dose late than not at all. You will still experience the same efficacy in the long run, although you may not see the full effect of the immunity until a few weeks after the second dose.

11. How long after receiving both doses of the vaccine until it is considered effective?

Similar to the flu vaccine, it typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination. That means it's possible a person could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and get sick. This is because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection. As a general rule, the vaccine is considered effective about two weeks after the second dose, according to the manufacturers. There is evidence that the first dose will begin providing some immunity, but it is still very important to receive the second dose for optimal results.

12. Can I choose which vaccine I get (Pfizer or Moderna)?

We do not recommend waiting for a specific manufacturer. Both Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have similar efficacy and potential side effects, and have shown decreased disease severity in the small numbers of study participants who contracted COVID-19 after receiving the vaccine. Both manufacturers require two doses. It is important to remember that the second dose you receive must be from the same manufacturer. Early defense is better than no defense against COVID-19.