

Covid-19 has changed everyone's life. However, the more people who vaccinate, the more our lives can get closer to what we used to enjoy. We at USFHP would like to see as many beneficiaries as possible become vaccinated. To ensure you have the best information on the Covid-19 vaccines, we wanted to answer some commonly asked questions.

What are the Covid vaccines?

- Both vaccines available in the U.S. at this time (Moderna and Pfizer) are what we call "mRNA vaccines". One benefit of mRNA vaccines is that the body "reads" the recipe to create antibodies, then the mRNA from the vaccine is quickly destroyed and eliminated from the body. Because the body quickly and efficiently clears the vaccines in a short period of time, a second dose is needed 3-4 weeks later to trigger the body to make enough antibodies to prevent Covid-19. The vaccines do NOT contain the virus, so you can't get Covid-19 from the vaccine.

Why should I get the vaccine?

- The vaccine allows the body to build up a defense against Covid-19 before you're exposed. In addition to protecting you from getting Covid-19, vaccines can slow the spread of Covid-19 in the community. When around 70% or more are vaccinated, something called "herd immunity" occurs. At this level of defense, the virus often doesn't have the ability to thrive and spread and the disease becomes uncommon. Polio and smallpox are examples of diseases that have been eliminated since so many people were vaccinated. Choosing to get the vaccine protects you, your loved ones, your neighbors, and people across the globe as we can all do our part to control the spread of Covid-19.

How effective is the vaccine?

- The Moderna and Pfizer vaccines are both 95% effective. What does that mean? It means that 95% fewer people exposed to Covid-19 will get sick. What about the other 5% that did catch Covid-19? They ended up having mild symptoms rather than becoming critically ill.

What are the side effects of the Covid-19 vaccine?

- There are a couple of mild side effects. First is injection pain and a sore muscle the day after the injection. This is similar to the flu shot and many other injections. Second, some people can feel like they're getting sick the day after the shot. This is NOT because they are getting Covid, this is because their body is "reading the recipe" and creating antibodies against Covid-19. These symptoms that are mild and last no longer than a couple of days indicate that your body is building up the defenses it will need when it is exposed to the real Covid-19 virus. Lastly, many people may have heard of reactions to the vaccine. This has only occurred in individuals who had severe allergies to multiple things and carried epinephrine with them for these allergies. All of these reactions occurred in the vaccination clinic within minutes of the vaccine being given and were able to be treated and the patients were safely allowed to go home. If you carry an

epinephrine pen for severe allergies, talk to your healthcare provider about getting the vaccine and being monitored for 15 minutes after getting the vaccination.

When can I get the vaccine?

- Vaccinations will occur in three waves.
 - Wave 1 - Frontline workers such as healthcare providers and essential workers. If you fall into this category you are given the opportunity to get the vaccine early (some have already received their vaccine). Individuals over age 75 will also be included in this wave.
 - Wave 2 - Those over age 65, people at high risk (cancer patients, diabetics, etc.), and those in communal living situations will be next. At the time of this writing, this is anticipated in early Spring (March/April).
 - Wave 3 – Low risk individuals should have the opportunity to get the Covid-19 vaccine by early/mid-summertime.

Will USFHP cover the vaccine?

- The Covid-19 vaccine, like all vaccinations, is covered 100% under your USFHP benefit.

Where can I get the vaccine?

- In the early stages, you may get your vaccine through programs at your worksite if you are an essential worker, or you may get it in an organized vaccination program if you live in a senior living facility. For all others, vaccines should be available through your healthcare provider or at large-chain pharmacies.

If I received the first shot, do I need to get the second shot?

- **YES.** The second shot is a necessary “booster” that allows the body to build up more antibodies and to create a memory so that the positive effects of the vaccine are not short lived. You will not have the full benefits of the vaccine until 3-4 weeks AFTER the SECOND dose.

What are good sources about the vaccine?

- The CDC (cdc.gov) and the Washington State Department of Health (doh.wa.gov) should be on the top of your list. Avoid getting your information from social media and blog sites. If you have questions, ask healthcare professionals who are being updated continually on the newest and best information on the vaccine?

Will I need to continue to mask and social distance after getting the vaccine?

- For a certain period of time, the answer is “yes”. Until enough people are vaccinated to have “herd immunity” it is likely that masks will still need to be worn and social distancing will need to be maintained. Even though it is less likely for you to become sick after getting the vaccine, it doesn’t mean you can’t still spread Covid to someone else if you were exposed recently.