

Frequently Asked Questions (*and Straight Answers*) Regarding COVID-19 Vaccination



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VACCINE PRIORITY & TIMELINE FOR AVAILABILITY

When will a vaccine(s) be available?

Official statements from federal and state regulators and major health authorities indicate that FDA approval of the first COVID-19 vaccine(s) is likely in mid-December. This would clear the way for immediate, large-scale distribution and enable millions of at-risk seniors and healthcare workers to receive vaccination starting in the coming days or weeks.

Who will receive first-priority vaccination, once available?

Senior living community residents in Assisted Living, Memory Care, Skilled Nursing and other long-term care settings have been recommended (per CDC & Federal recommendations) to receive top-tier vaccination in Priority Group 1A. And while states reserve the right to alter or uphold priority, we believe all states will closely consider this recommendation as they develop and finalize plans.

Assisted Living & Memory Care is being mentioned specifically. What about Independent Living community residents?

The CDC and Federal recommendations suggest that residents living in a congregate setting (like an Independent Living community) be in a higher-priority group as opposed to seniors living among the general population (single-family homes, apartments, with family, etc.).

However, because states ultimately have the final say regarding vaccine priority, the determinations may vary by state, although we believe Independent Living community residents are likely to receive top-tier vaccination priority.

What is the expected vaccine priority and protocol for care providers, administrators and other community team members?

Official recommendations call for all team members in long-term care settings (Assisted Living, Memory

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Care, Skilled Nursing, Independent Living, etc.) to be given the same, top-tier priority as residents. We anticipate most states will adhere to the recommendations, perhaps with some exceptions as deemed proper at the state level. Discovery Senior Living specifically has programming in place to ensure vaccination of all consenting team members in the most timely fashion possible, and at no cost to team members.

VACCINATION PROCESS & PROTOCOLS

How will vaccines be administered to senior living community residents?

All Discovery Senior Living communities have arranged for vaccine management through preferred pharmacy partners CVS and/or Walgreens. One of those providers will visit each community on pre-scheduled days to administer vaccines on behalf of consenting residents and team members, who must be present and ready to receive theirs at those times.

Both pharmacy providers are already actively reaching out to registered communities to begin the planning and scheduling processes for vaccine administration, with several Discovery Senior Living communities already having been contacted. Be sure to ask about the latest developments at the community level, and recognize that more concrete information will become available after the FDA authorizes Emergency Use for the vaccine(s).

HOW THE VACCINE(S) WORK

What is the process for vaccine administration?

The first two vaccines likely to receive FDA Emergency Use Authorization (Pfizer-BioNTech & Moderna) must be administered in two, separate doses given three to four weeks apart. As such, approved pharmacy partners (CVS, Walgreens, etc.) will visit each community on three occasions to administer required doses of the vaccines, with that extra (third) visit scheduled to impart added flexibility.

Is there any cost for the vaccine?

No. COVID-19 vaccination will be administered free of charge for resident seniors and all Discovery Senior Living team members regardless of their insurance status. Pharmacy partners CVS and Walgreens will be supplied vaccines and will bill the government, private insurance, Medicare or Medicaid for administration, and one of those parties or Discovery Senior Living will absorb the cost of vaccine administration for all team members.

Is the vaccine safe and effective?

Having reviewed two months of available clinical trial data (because immune response as well as most side effects and/or adverse reactions would occur within that time frame), scientists, medical experts and government agencies believe that any approved COVID-19 vaccines will be safe and effective for public use, even in older adults and those with pre-existing medical conditions. As with any vaccine, however, public health authorities will continually monitor safety and efficacy data as time passes and more people are vaccinated.

Are they injecting me with a live or deadened virus?

No. The earliest prospective vaccines work by targeting the virus' spike protein, which is what allows it to attach to the body's cells and gain entrance. The vaccine, then, contains genetic code of a portion of the virus, which develops antibodies designed to bind and block the spike protein, effectively preventing entrance to the cells and helping avoid the resulting infection and disease.

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Can getting the vaccine cause me to become infected with the virus?

No. Because the earliest prospective vaccines contain no live, weakened or deadened virus components, it is impossible to contract COVID-19 as a direct result of becoming vaccinated.

What are the potential side effects?

While those who receive COVID-19 vaccination(s) may experience some (generally mild) side effects, clinical trial data suggests that those side effects would be temporary, including sore arm at the injection site, and tiredness and lethargy for a period of a 1-2 days while the body's immune system works to process the vaccine.

Should I still receive my flu shot?

Yes. It's especially important to receive the flu shot this year, as a possible prevalence of both COVID-19 and the flu virus this winter could cause a dual infection that would likely result in more severe disease and increased chance of death. In addition, reducing the number of people requiring hospitalization from the flu will help protect the nation's healthcare system from becoming overwhelmed in the event of an increase in COVID-19 cases this winter.

WHAT WE STILL DON'T KNOW...

How long will protection last following receipt of the vaccine?

It is yet unknown how long the vaccine is likely to offer protection against COVID-19. This will certainly be a foremost consideration for ongoing, phase 3 trials and will be continually monitored throughout the coming years. In the meantime, the vaccine's high rate of effectiveness at producing an immune response signals a protective advantage, even if it's yet to be determined for how long that protection will last.

Are there any long-term side effects from the vaccine?

It is still too early to determine if longer-term side effects are likely as a result of receiving the vaccine (or contracting the actual virus). Here again, ongoing phase 3 trials involving tens of thousands of people from different age, health and demographic profiles will be closely monitored to learn more about the potential and prevalence of long-term side effects.

GOING ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS FOLLOWING VACCINATION

Can I go back to "normal" after receiving the vaccine?

That's hard to say, although it is likely that mask mandates and recommended safety measures will remain in place into the New Year, and even if you've received vaccination, you will have to comply with all federal, state and local requirements. That's because it takes time to achieve herd immunity, and it's still yet to be seen if the vaccine will prevent virus transmission between parties, or simply help stop infection and the resulting disease.

Is there need to quarantine or self-isolate after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine?

No. Because the vaccine contains no live or other risk-bearing components of the virus, you are not considered any more at risk to contract or transmit the virus after vaccination than before. Continue to observe all rules and recommendations from federal, state and local public health authorities, but you need not quarantine or enter isolation simply on account of having received the vaccine. However, if you are exposed to active COVID-19 before the vaccine has the opportunity to produce immunity, isolation or quarantine would be required.

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Do I still have to wear a mask and follow ongoing COVID-19 safety measures?

Yes. Even after vaccination, it's important to stay vigilant and continue to do your part to stop the spread of COVID-19 until public health authorities officially announce that the threat has been defeated.

How long following FDA approval might it be before the general public is vaccinated?

Estimates vary on this, however, it's possible that it will take a minimum of 6 months to a year before the general public, and not just members of the highest-priority populations, complete the vaccination process against COVID-19.

OUR POSITION ON COVID-19 VACCINATION

The Discovery Senior Living organization highly encourages ALL residents and team members to get the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it's available to them.

We believe science dictates the necessity for large-scale vaccinations based on evidence from other diseases and associated vaccines to eliminate, eradicate and greatly diminish the impact of widespread illness. Moreover, herd immunity can only be achieved when a high percentage of the population has been vaccinated or already contracted the virus.

Seniors, as the most vulnerable segment of our society, should get the vaccine to protect themselves, their families and the team members and healthcare professionals who serve them on a regular basis.

WHAT INFORMED ACTIONS TO TAKE NOW

Start today! Locate your current insurance card(s), and make copies of the front and back, if you haven't already. Also ask to receive and sign any necessary consent forms so there's nothing left to do except show up on the scheduled day(s) and receive your COVID-19 vaccination.

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