GEORGIA CHAMBER

COVID19 Resource & Recovery

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COVID-19 Vaccine: Frequently Asked Questions

When will COVID-19 vaccine arrive in Georgia?

The first doses of COVID-19 vaccine arrived in Georgia in mid-December and allocations continue on a regular schedule. Initial supply is limited and individuals receiving the vaccine will be prioritized based on risk of exposure and transmission. It will take until spring of 2021 for the vaccine to be widely available to the general public.

Who should be vaccinated against COVID-19 infection?

The goal is for everyone to be able to easily get vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as large enough quantities are available. Once vaccine is widely available, the plan is to have several thousand vaccination providers offering COVID-19 vaccines in doctors' offices, retail pharmacies, hospitals, federally qualified health centers and county health departments.

Who will get vaccinated first?

The Georgia Department of Public Health is following the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) for prioritizing vaccination. The guidelines also allow states the flexibility to tailor these recommendations based on their specific needs and available vaccine.
Based on the risk of infection and transmission of COVID-19, and ethical concerns, healthcare workers, residents and staff of long-term care facilities, adults over age 65, and police and fire personnel are in the highest priority group to receive vaccine.

Where will the first doses of COVID-19 vaccine be given?

Vaccine will be given through closed points of dispensing or PODs. These sites include public health clinics, hospitals, long-term care facilities, pharmacies, emergency medical services, etc., and are only accessible to individuals in defined priority groups.

What is ACIP?

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) is a panel of medical and public health experts and medical ethicists who develop recommendations on the use of vaccines in the United States. The recommendations provide public health guidance for safe use of vaccines and related biological products.

What COVID-19 vaccines are available now?

On December 11, 2020, Pfizer was given Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for its COVID-19 vaccine, and the Moderna vaccine was given EUA December 18, 2020.
There are large clinical trials currently in progress or being planned for other COVID-19 vaccines in the United States.

What is an EUA?

In certain public health emergencies, FDA may issue an Emergency Use Authorization or EUA which allows a drug or vaccine to be used when there are no sufficient treatments or vaccines available. The FDA may grant an EUA once studies have demonstrated the safety and effectiveness of a vaccine but before the manufacturer has submitted a license application and/or before the FDA has completed its formal review of the license application.

Is the vaccine safe?

Safety is a key concern among health officials and experts. Before the FDA approves a vaccine, the manufacturer must do rigorous research and testing to ensure the vaccine's safety and effectiveness. The FDA independently reviews and verifies the information from these tests. It then decides whether the vaccine can be licensed and given to the public.

No major safety concerns were uncovered in the FDA's review of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine.

For each vaccine authorized by the FDA, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) carefully reviews all available data about the vaccine from clinical trials and other studies, and makes recommendations for vaccine use in the general public. Recommendations include groups that should and should not receive the vaccine, as well as the timing, volume, number, and spacing of doses in a vaccine series.

The FDA and CDC continue to closely monitor vaccine safety after the public begins using the vaccine. Both agencies have longstanding and new safety systems in place for heightened monitoring of all COVID-19 vaccines.

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

The most common known side-effects of the COVID-19 vaccine are short-term injection site pain, fever, chills, headaches, muscle aches and joint pain. These symptoms are temporary and are in line with side effects some people experience from some other vaccines, including the flu shot and the vaccine to prevent shingles.

Vaccines work to fight disease by producing an immune response within the body, and sometimes that means flu-like symptoms occur as your body responds to the vaccine. It is normal and expected.

Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccine?

No. The COVID-19 vaccine does not contain the live virus that causes COVID-19 and cannot cause COVID-19.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for children? What about pregnant women?

The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine has been approved for use in individuals 16 and older. The Moderna vaccine has been approved for use in individuals 18 and older.

Research is continuing and clinical trials will begin enrollment in the near future to study the vaccine safety and effectiveness in children.

Research is ongoing, but pregnancy-specific data do not yet exist. Based on how the COVID-19 vaccine works, medical experts do not believe the vaccine poses a risk for pregnant women and their babies. Pregnant women should discuss their options with their healthcare provider.

Can people with an egg allergy receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

Neither the Pfizer nor the Moderna vaccines contain egg.

How many doses of vaccine will I need?

Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require two doses.

The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is administered intramuscularly (into the muscle, just like a flu shot) as a series of two doses, three weeks apart. The Moderna vaccine is also given intramuscularly as a series of two doses, 28 days apart.

Both doses are needed to get the most protection the vaccine has to offer against COVID-19.

What if I only get one dose of the vaccine?

It is recommend that individuals receive both doses of the vaccine to ensure full protection.

How effective is the COVID-19 vaccine?

The Pfizer vaccine showed a 95% efficacy rate 7 days after the second dose. The vaccine was 94% effective in adults >65 years old. The Moderna vaccine showed a 94% efficacy rate 14% days after the second dose. These results were consistent across gender, age and ethnicity.

If I had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to be vaccinated?

It is recommended individuals who have had and recovered from COVID-19 also should be vaccinated.

Do I still need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others once I receive 2 doses of vaccine?

It's important for everyone to continue using all the tools available to help stop this pandemic as we learn more about how COVID-19 vaccines work in real-world conditions.

It will take time after the vaccination for your body to respond and make enough antibodies to protect you. This could take up to one to two weeks after your last dose. Current information suggests that it is possible that someone who has been vaccinated against COVID-19 may still have a mild or asymptomatic infection or spread the virus to others.

So it is important to continue taking precautions. Cover your mouth and nose with a mask when around others, stay at least 6 feet away from others, avoid crowds and wash your hands often.

Will the COVID-19 vaccine be free?

Yes, the COVID-19 vaccine will be free. Vaccine providers may be able to charge administration fees for giving the shot but they will be billed to insurance with no out-of pocket cost to the patient.