COVID-19 vaccine

Like other preventative measures, including hand hygiene, social distancing, and masking, vaccination is recommended to help you avoid getting COVID-19. By doing your part, you can help bring the pandemic to an end and get your community back to normal.

Vaccinations at Novant Health UVA Health System

We are following guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Virginia Department of Health (VDH) for rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine. We are currently in **Phase 1A** and are vaccinating healthcare personnel who work in our facilities and in our communities, as well residents of **Novant Health UVA Health System Caton Merchant House**. We expect to soon expand to **Phase 1B**.

Please continue to review information about the COVID-19 vaccine from the **CDC** and **VDH**.

Your vaccine questions answered

There is a lot of information to take in about COVID-19, and a new vaccine raises many questions. Our experts have the answers you're looking for.

Is the vaccine safe?

The **Food and Drug Administration** (FDA) must verify that the vaccines are safe and can prevent COVID-19. The FDA can authorize the use of vaccine under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA), which it has done for the vaccines from **Pfizer** and **Moderna**.

Before an EUA is granted, an independent committee reviews and verifies the data showing the vaccine is safe and effective.

Next, the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices reviews the data and recommends who should be vaccinated based on clinical trial results.

At Novant Health UVA Health System, commitment to team member and patient safety will remain our priority. We will not administer a vaccine that is not safe.

In the studies looking at the vaccines from **Pfizer** and **Moderna**, each vaccine had a side-effect profile similar to other vaccines, like the flu vaccine. It is recommended that if you have a severe (anaphylaxis) reaction to another vaccine or injectable medication that you do not get this vaccine without talking with your doctor first.

What type of vaccine will be used?

The current COVID-19 vaccines that have been approved by the FDA are **messenger RNA** (mRNA) vaccines. mRNA vaccines teach your cells how to make a protein that triggers an immune response inside your body, allowing your body to fight the COVID-19 virus.

How many doses of the vaccine are required?

The currently approved vaccines require two doses given either 21 or 28 days apart, depending on the vaccine brand. **Both doses must be the same brand of vaccine.**

What are the short-term, expected effects of the vaccines?

Some participants experienced common side effects in the vaccine trials, like a sore arm, warmth in the arm, malaise, fatigue or a low-grade fever. These side effects typically only lasted a few hours. Not everyone will experience these effects to the same degree.

What are the long-term side-effects of the vaccines?

It is unknown at this time if there are any long-term effects of the current vaccines. The FDA and vaccine manufacturers are continuing to watch the vaccines' long-term safety; this is a normal process for all new medications.

Can the vaccine give me COVID-19 when administered?

No. mRNA vaccines cannot cause COVID-19.

Do I need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others if I have received two doses of the vaccine?

Yes. It is still important for everyone to continue to cover their mouth and nose with a mask, wash their hands often, and stay at least six feet away from others.

How long after the second dose should I consider myself immune?

According to the CDC, immunity to COVID-19 should begin one to two weeks after the second dose.

If I have had both doses, and no known exposure, can I safely be around high-risk, nonvaccinated people?

Until we have further information, we do not recommend being around high-risk, nonvaccinated individuals.

What is community (herd) immunity?

According to the CDC, community or herd immunity is a situation in which a large proportion of the population is immune through vaccination and/or prior illness, decreasing the chance of spreading the disease from person to person.

What percentage of the population needs to get vaccinated to have herd immunity to COVID-19, and will this help us "get back to normal"?

While we do not know the exact number, a good goal is to have 80% of the population immunized. The faster we can reach 80%, the closer we will be to "getting back to normal."

Can children receive the vaccine?

The Pfizer vaccine is approved for kids 16 years of age and older. The Moderna vaccine is approved for adults 18 years of age and older.

Is it safe for pregnant women to get the vaccine?

It is unknown at this time. The vaccine was not studied in pregnant women; however, the **American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists** recommends that COVID-19 vaccines should not be withheld from pregnant individuals who meet criteria for vaccination based on Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices-recommended priority groups. We recommend that pregnant women consult with their primary care physician prior to getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

How does the vaccine affect those who have an autoimmune disease?

We are waiting on data from the EUA that may give more information on these types of issues. We recommend that immunocompromised patients consult with their primary care physician prior to getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

Can I receive the vaccine if I've had COVID-19?

Yes, you can still receive the vaccine if you have had COVID-19. You should wait until you have recovered from being sick and you are out of isolation.

If you have had COVID-19, do you still need the vaccine?

Yes. Even if you have had COVID-19, you are still at risk of getting the virus again and should get the vaccine.

Will we need to receive the COVID-19 vaccine annually like the flu vaccine?

We still don't know how long the COVID-19 vaccine will provide immunity. It's unclear whether a yearly booster shot will be needed.

How will those administering the vaccine know if individuals have chronic conditions?

We are asking Individuals to self-identify if they have chronic conditions. We want to make sure everyone at a higher risk of getting COVID-19 can access the vaccine, including those who do not have access to a healthcare provider and do not have documented chronic conditions.

What determines which COVID-19 vaccine an individual will receive?

At this time, vaccine availability will determine which vaccine a person will receive.

Does Novant Health UVA Health System have freezers to store the vaccines?

Yes, Novant Health UVA Health System has the right freezers to store both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines safely.

Is the injection taken while the solution/vaccine is cold?

Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines will be at room temperature when given.

Is one company going to have a better vaccine compared to another, and will Novant Health UVA Health System only issue a certain company's vaccine?

The studies that looked at the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines showed a similar ability to protect against the COVID-19 virus. As more vaccine becomes available, we may narrow it to a single vaccine. For now, we have both

vaccines to make sure we have enough vaccines for our healthcare workers and eligible patients.

For vaccines that require two doses, what is being done to ensure adequate supplies for the second dose?

We are coordinating closely with the state to ensure second doses when we have scheduled the first doses.