

COVID-19 Vaccine Talking Points

For Health Care Providers

These talking points are for the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and health care partners to assist in conversations with patients.

Key Messages:

- The COVID-19 vaccine is your best protection against COVID-19. The vaccine will help your body fight the virus if you are exposed and help prevent the spread of the virus to those around you.
- There are three vaccines currently available. Three vaccines are authorized for emergency use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA):
 - Pfizer-BioNTech (for 5 to 15 year olds)
 - Moderna
 - Johnson & Johnson (Janssen)
- One vaccine has been fully approved by the FDA for people 16 years and older: Pfizer-BioNTech (now known as Comirnaty).
- The vaccines greatly reduce your chance of getting really sick if you get COVID-19. If you do get sick, your risk of needing to go to the hospital or dying is also lower for all known virus variants, including the Delta variant.
- The COVID-19 vaccine is available to all people 5 years and older. To find a vaccine, go to vaccinelocator.doh.wa.gov or call 1-833-VAX-HELP (833-829-4357), then press #. For interpretation services, state your language when your call is answered.

Talking Points:

Vaccine Safety

- The FDA granted an emergency use authorization (EUA) to the Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson - Janssen COVID-19 vaccines. Both the [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\)](#) and [Western States Scientific Safety Review Workgroup](#) voted to recommend the vaccines.
- Before applying for an EUA, scientists gave the vaccine to tens of thousands of people in clinical trials to look at the safety and efficacy of the vaccine. They found no serious safety concerns. Since then, these vaccines have been given safely to millions of people.
- Pfizer-BioNTech (Comirnaty) was also fully approved by the FDA for people 16 years and older. For full FDA approval, the FDA looked at data from more than 12,000 people who had been vaccinated to evaluate the effectiveness and safety of the vaccine.

- Anyone (patient, provider, or caregiver) can report a suspected adverse event related to the COVID-19 vaccine to the [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System \(VAERS\)](#).
- You can sign-up for a smartphone-based tool from CDC, called [v-safe](#), to receive personalized health check-ins after receiving the vaccine. Learn more at www.cdc.gov/vsafe.

Who Should Get the Vaccine

- The COVID-19 vaccine is recommended and available to all people 5 years and older, including people who are pregnant, lactating, or planning to become pregnant. People who are under 18 years of age may only receive the Pfizer-BioNTech/Comirnaty vaccine and may need consent from an authorized adult.
- If you previously had COVID-19, you should still get the vaccine to make sure you have the best protection against the virus.

Vaccine Considerations

- It is your choice whether to get the vaccine for COVID-19, but employers could require it. Washington currently requires the COVID-19 vaccine for [cabinet agency state employees](#), health care workers, long-term care providers, and [educators](#).
- The federal government will cover the full cost of the vaccine. You should not be charged or billed.
- For COVID-19 vaccines requiring two doses, you should receive the same vaccine product for both doses.
- You can administer the COVID-19 vaccine with other routine vaccinations, such as the flu vaccine.

About the Vaccines

- The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines, which means they tell our cells how to create a “spike” protein that will help our bodies identify the coronavirus if we meet it.
- The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is a viral vector vaccine, which means it uses a different harmless virus (adenovirus) to tell our cells how to create a protein that helps our bodies identify the coronavirus if we meet it.
- None of the currently authorized or fully approved COVID-19 vaccines are live virus vaccines.
- The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are a two-dose series. The Pfizer vaccine is given 21 days apart, and Moderna is given 28 days apart.
- The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is a one-dose series.
- Protection is not immediate. It will take about two weeks after completing the vaccine series for full protection.

- Clinical trials showed each of the vaccines to be effective at preventing symptomatic COVID-19 infection, hospitalizations, and deaths. The vaccines are just as effective in different age groups, including those over 65 years old and different racial and ethnic groups.
- You may feel side effects, such as a sore arm, fatigue, headache, or muscle pain. The side effects typically appear within two days of getting the vaccine and last about a day. Side effects are a sign of an immune response.
- You should not get the COVID-19 vaccines if you have a history of a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis, hives, swelling, wheezing, etc.) to any ingredient or a previous dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.
 - You should wait for 15 minutes after receiving the vaccine so you can be monitored for an allergic reaction. Patients with a history of anaphylaxis should wait for 30 minutes.

Booster and Additional Doses

- An **additional dose** is for patients who completed the initial vaccine series but didn't have a strong enough immune response.
- A **booster dose** is for patients when it's likely that their immunity after the initial vaccine series waned over time.
- CDC recommends:
 - An additional (third) dose of the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines to [certain immunocompromised groups](#) at least 28 days after their second dose.
 - A booster dose of a COVID-19 vaccine to everyone 16 years and older.
- People who got the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine for their primary series should get a booster dose at least **two months** after their first dose.
- People who got an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) for their primary series should get a booster dose at least **six months** after their second dose.

Resources:

- [COVID-19 vaccine information for health care providers](#) (includes information on clinical practices, vaccine management, and patient education)
- [COVID-19 discussion guides for health care providers](#)
- [Vaccine Facts](#)
- [Resources and recommendations for COVID-19 vaccines in 30+ languages](#)