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**Iowa Department of Public Health  
COVID-19 Vaccine  
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)  
October 19, 2020**

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**COVID-19 Vaccines**

**When will the COVID-19 vaccine be available?**

IDPH anticipates the vaccine will first be available in late Fall 2020.

**Will I need more than one dose of COVID-19 vaccine?**

All but one of the COVID-19 vaccines currently in phase three clinical trials require two doses. It is anticipated the two doses will be separated by >21 or >28 days. The different vaccine products will NOT be interchangeable. The second dose must be completed with the same vaccine brand as the first dose. One COVID-19 vaccine will only require a single dose to provide protection.

**How do we know the COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective?**

Safety is the top priority for any vaccine. Early results from the first COVID-19 vaccines tested in people showed it worked as intended with no serious side effects. New vaccines undergo a rigorous review of laboratory and clinical data to ensure the safety and effectiveness of these products. These vaccines may also be required to undergo additional studies to further evaluate the vaccine and often to address specific questions about the vaccine's safety, effectiveness, or possible side effects ([FDA](#)). The U.S. vaccine safety system ensures all vaccines are as safe as possible. Safety is a top priority while federal partners work to make COVID-19 vaccines available ([CDC](#)).

**Will the COVID-19 vaccine be prioritized to certain groups?**

Due to initial limited supplies of the vaccine, doses may be limited to certain priority groups such as health care workers, residents of long term care and assisted living, and those who work in industries where social distancing is difficult. As more vaccines become available, these groups will broaden so more people are eligible to receive the vaccine.

**Will enough COVID-19 vaccine be available for everyone who wants it?**

Limited vaccines may be available this fall, but the COVID-19 vaccine supply is expected to increase substantially in 2021 and eventually be available for everyone who wants to receive it.

**If I already had COVID-19 do I still need to get the vaccine?**

There is not enough information currently available to say if or for how long after infection someone is protected from getting COVID-19 again; this is called natural immunity. Early evidence suggests natural immunity from COVID-19 may not last very long, but more studies are needed to better understand this. Until we have a vaccine available and know more about natural immunity to COVID-19, CDC cannot comment on whether people who had COVID-19 should get a COVID-19 vaccine. Once a vaccine has been authorized or approved, ACIP will make recommendations to CDC on who should get a COVID-19 vaccine.

**How long will immunity from the COVID-19 vaccine last?**

It is not yet known how long immunity from COVID-19 infection lasts. The duration of immunity from COVID-19 vaccines are currently being evaluated. Data from clinical trials will be used to determine how long immunity will last and if it will be necessary for people to receive a booster dose of vaccine each year. Additional information will be forthcoming as vaccine studies continue.

**Will the vaccine give me COVID-19 or make me sick?**

Vaccines contain the same germs that cause disease. They have been either killed or weakened to the point that they cannot make you sick. A vaccine stimulates your immune system to produce antibodies, exactly like it would if you were exposed to the disease. After getting vaccinated, you develop immunity to the disease, without having to get the disease first.

**What are the side effects of the vaccine?**

Any vaccine or medication can cause side effects. For the most part these are minor (for example, a sore arm or low-grade fever) and go away within a few days. Safety is the top priority of any vaccine. Early results from the first COVID-19 vaccines tested in people showed it worked as intended with no serious side effects.

**Will there be a cost for the vaccine?**

It is anticipated the vaccine will be provided at no cost. In some cases, a provider may charge a small fee to you or your health insurance for the administration of the vaccine.

**If I receive the COVID-19 vaccine will I still need to wear a mask?**

Stopping a pandemic requires using all the tools available. Vaccines boost your immune system so it will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. Other steps, like masks and social distancing, help reduce your chance of being exposed to or spreading the virus. Together, COVID-19 vaccination and following CDC's recommendations for [how to protect yourself and others](#) will offer the best protection from COVID-19.

**Influenza COVID-19 Vaccines**

**What is the difference between influenza (Flu) and COVID-19?**

Influenza (Flu) and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different viruses. COVID-19 is caused by infection with a new coronavirus (called SARS-CoV-2) and flu is caused by infection with [influenza viruses](#). Some of the symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are similar, it may be hard to tell the difference based on symptoms alone. Testing may be needed to help confirm a diagnosis. Flu and COVID-19 share many characteristics, but there are some key differences between the two. [This table](#) compares COVID-19 and flu, given the most current information available.

**Will there be flu along with COVID-19 in the fall and winter?**

It is likely flu viruses and the virus causing COVID-19 will both be circulating this fall and winter. Getting a flu vaccine will be more important than ever. The CDC recommends all people 6 months and older receive a yearly flu vaccine.

**Will receiving a flu vaccine protect against COVID-19?**

Getting a flu vaccine will not protect against COVID-19, however flu vaccination has many other important [benefits](#). Flu vaccines have been shown to reduce the risk of flu illness, hospitalization and death. Getting a flu vaccine this fall will be more important than ever, not only to reduce your risk from flu but also to help conserve potentially scarce health care resources.

**If coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is spreading in my community, should I still go out to get a flu vaccine?**

Yes. Getting a flu vaccine is an essential part of protecting you and your family's health this season. To protect your health when getting a flu vaccine, follow CDC's recommendations for [running essential errands](#) and [doctor visits](#). Continue to [take everyday preventive actions](#).

**How can I be sure that I will be safe from illness going out to get vaccines if flu and COVID-19 are spreading in my community?**

Healthcare providers are taking extra precautions to protect patients. Some of these measures include things like wearing masks, hand and surface sanitation practices, and physical distancing. It is important for you to take measures to protect yourself and others as well. Continue to [take everyday preventive actions](#).

Keeping your vaccines up to date protects not only you, but others around you. It is our best defense against vaccine preventable diseases.

**Should I go out and get the flu vaccine if I have COVID-19 or am under isolation because I am a close contact to someone that has COVID-19?**

No. Vaccination should be postponed for people with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, regardless of whether you have symptoms, until you have met the [criteria](#) to discontinue isolation. While mild illness is not a contraindication to flu vaccination, vaccination should be postponed to avoid exposing healthcare personnel and other patients to the virus that causes COVID-19. When your isolation period is completed, it is important to get your flu vaccine.

Additionally, a prior infection with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 or flu does not protect someone from future flu infections. The best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated every year.