



ACEP Spokesperson Toolkit: COVID-19 Vaccine

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COVID-19

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General Messaging Guidance

The rollout of the first COVID-19 vaccines has officially begun throughout the country, and it’s critical that patients hear directly from emergency physicians that it is safe, effective and a necessary to ending the pandemic. ACEP’s official messaging will be updated as we learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine and the dissemination process.

The following talking points provide guidance on our priority messages, but they are not a script—it’s best when put you these messages into your own words that reflect the particular conditions in your area.

Be sure to check ACEP’s [COVID-19 Vaccine Patient Information Center](#) for the latest patient information and [ACEP’s COVID-19 Media Hub](#) for additional Public Relations (PR) resources.

Conditions and concerns will vary by state and community, but your local media is eager to feature local health experts like yourself. ACEP’s PR Department can work with you to tailor letters-to-the editor, op-eds, press releases or prepare for media interviews to help advocate for emergency physicians and protect patients. Please email PR@acep.org if you have questions or need assistance.

Talking Points

The following are talking points to use in conversations, media interviews, and social media to reassure the general public that the COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective, and that they should get vaccinated when eligible.

The COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective.

- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has currently authorized emergency use of two vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna.
- Both vaccines prevented more than 90 percent of COVID-19 cases, and even those that did contract the virus only had mild symptoms.
- While “Project Warp Speed” removed the barriers and time associated with reporting and other logistical barriers, the companies still had to follow the FDA’s usual rigorous vaccine approval process to ensure they provide the appropriate protections and meet all required safety measures.

Emergency physicians encourage adults—when they are eligible—to get the COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccination is a critically necessary step in ensuring we, as a society, can help to reduce the spread of the virus, end the pandemic, and return to our usual way of life.

- The vaccine is free, although you may want to check with your health insurer about whether they will cover the cost to administer the vaccine.
- While both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are highly effective at preventing serious illness from the virus, they should not be considered treatment if you currently have COVID-19. If you do contract the virus, you still need to see a physician to get proper treatment.

The available vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna require two doses, 21 and 28 days apart respectively. You can expect your immunity to become active two or three weeks after the second injection.

- You need to get the same subsequent vaccine injection (either Pfizer or Moderna) each time.
- It is expected that in the coming months additional vaccines from other companies will be available and only require a single dose.

Not everyone will be able to get vaccinated right away. State and local health departments will determine who will be eligible to get the vaccine in a phased rollout beginning now.

- Health care workers will be eligible first, along with elderly people living in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.
- Next will likely be essential workers—those who work in food and agriculture, manufacturing, law enforcement, education, transportation, corrections, emergency response and other sectors.
- After essential workers, the groups recommended by the CDC committee are adults with medical conditions that put them at high risk of infection and people over the age of 65.

Adults who are not in the tier 1 groups—healthy adults under 65 who don't work in health care or otherwise qualify as essential workers—should have access to the vaccine by May or June, depending on the volume of the nation's supply.

- At this point, neither the Pfizer nor Moderna vaccine have been tested in children so currently the vaccine is only available for adults.
- Likewise, the clinical trials did not include pregnant women. So those who are pregnant, or breast feeding should talk with their physician about getting vaccinated.
- By late spring/early summer, we expect two more vaccines (from Johnson & Johnson and Astra Zeneca) to be available.

Once it's widely available, we recommend that you contact your health care provider to decide the best location to get vaccinated.

- While individuals who come to the emergency department or an urgent care center may be vaccinated (once it's ready and available for their respective group), it may be easier for your primary care provider, pharmacist, or local health department to follow up with you about getting the second dose.

Despite the chance of possible side effects, the vaccine is safe. The benefits of avoiding contracting the virus outweigh potential risks.

- Some participants in both Pfizer's and Moderna's trials experienced typical mild viral symptoms including fever, muscle aches, bad headaches, and fatigue after receiving the shots, but the side effects generally did not last more than a day.

- Preliminary data suggests that, compared with most flu vaccines, the COVID-19 shots have a somewhat higher rate of such reactions, which are almost always normal signs that the body's immune response is kicking in.
- Those with a history of significant allergic reactions or previous anaphylaxis should check with their physician before receiving the vaccine.

Researchers and government officials will continue to monitor those who have received the vaccine to study potential side-effects and see if adjustments need to be made to the current vaccine recommendations.

- One of these systems is the CDC's voluntary [V-SAFE program](#).
- V-SAFE will use text messaging and web surveys for the CDC to check in with those who received the COVID-19 vaccine to see if health problems arose following vaccination.
- The system also will follow up via phone with anyone who reports medically-significant side effects.

Once you get vaccinated you should still plan to wear a protective mask when in public and socially distance yourself from others.

- It takes several weeks for your body to build an adequate protective response, so you will need to continue pre-vaccine mitigation efforts during this transition time.
- In addition, it is possible for those who have been vaccinated to get infected without developing symptoms and unknowingly transmit the virus to others.

We will continue to learn more about this virus together.

- Experts need to understand more about the protection that the COVID-19 vaccine provides before making a recommendation about when you no longer need to wear a mask and socially distance. Other factors, including how many people get vaccinated and how the virus is spreading in communities, will also affect this decision.

Social Media Resources

The following are sample posts for you to share on social media. They will be most effective if you use them as inspiration or templates to be personalized. Your audience will always respond better to your authentic voice. Each post is accompanied by a supplemental graphic to be posted as an image and reiterate our central talking points. You can download all the social cards [here](#).

SAFE AND EFFECTIVE

This post is intended to reassure your audience that the historic speed of development of these *vaccines doesn't mean they are any less safe or effective.*

Facebook

It's natural to have questions, but the COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. They were developed following the rigorous safety measures of the FDA's vaccine approval process, and clinical trials have proven that they prevent more than 90% of cases.

Learn more: www.emergencyphysicians.org/COVIDVaccine

Twitter

It's natural to have questions, but the COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. They were developed following rigorous safety measures and clinical trials have proven they prevent more than 90% of cases. Learn more from

@EmergencyDocs: www.emergencyphysicians.org/COVIDVaccine

Social Card

Download [here](#).

The COVID-19 Vaccine is Safe and Effective

- ✓ Prevents over 90% of COVID-19 cases
- ✓ Reduces the severity of symptoms if you do contract the virus
- ✓ Approved by FDA following protections and safety measures

EMERGENCY
-PHYSICIANS.ORG

Questions about the vaccine? We have answers.
→ EmergencyPhysicians.org/COVIDVaccine

A CRITICAL STEP

This post underscores the importance of widespread vaccination as a step toward ending the pandemic and directly encourages your audience to get the vaccine when eligible.

Facebook

With the vaccine rollout beginning, there is light at the end of the tunnel. Widespread vaccination is a critical step toward ending this pandemic.

As an emergency physician, I encourage you to contact your health care provider to get vaccinated when eligible. www.emergencyphysicians.org/COVIDVaccine

Twitter

With the vaccine rollout beginning, there is light at the end of the tunnel. Widespread vaccination is a critical step to end the pandemic. As an emergency physician, I encourage you to contact your health care provider to get vaccinated when eligible.

www.emergencyphysicians.org/COVIDVaccine

Social Card

Download [here](#).



Critical to Ending the COVID-19 Pandemic

Vaccination is a critically necessary step to reduce the spread of the virus, end this pandemic, and return to our usual way of life.

Emergency physicians encourage all adults to get vaccinated when eligible.

EMERGENCY PHYSICIANS.ORG

Questions about the vaccine? We have answers.

→ EmergencyPhysicians.org/COVIDVaccine

HOW TO GET VACCINATED

Facebook

Initial availability will be limited to people at high risk, but once you're eligible, contact your primary provider, pharmacist, or local health department to get your shots. And don't forget to keep staying safe!

Learn more: www.emergencyphysicians.org/COVIDVaccine

Twitter

Once you're eligible for the vaccine, contact your primary provider, pharmacist, or local health department to schedule your shots. And don't forget to keep staying safe! Learn more: www.emergencyphysicians.org/COVIDVaccine

Social Card

Download [here](#).

How Do I Get the COVID Vaccine?

- 1 Wait for Eligibility**
Health departments are managing a phased rollout of the vaccine. Expect wide availability by May or June.
- 2 Get Your Shots**
Contact your health care provider. You should receive a second dose either three or four weeks after the first.
- 3 Keep Up Safety**
Keep wearing a mask and maintaining social distance. It may be possible to spread the virus after vaccination.

EMERGENCY PHYSICIANS.ORG

Questions about the vaccine? We have answers.
→ [EmergencyPhysicians.org/COVIDVaccine](https://www.emergencyphysicians.org/COVIDVaccine)

GOT MY COVID SHOT

If you've received your vaccination or are scheduled to do so, post a photo or short video to show people that it's a safe and positive experience. Also feel free to write about how it felt or why you chose to get vaccinated.

Facebook

I just #GotMyCOVIDShot. Getting vaccinated will help me care for my patients and community more safely. We all need to do our part to slow the spread and end this pandemic.

If you have questions about the vaccine, take a look at ACEP's COVID-19 Vaccine Information Center: www.emergencyphysicians.org/COVIDVaccine

Twitter

I just #GotMyCOVIDShot. Getting vaccinated will help me care for my patients and community more safely. If you have questions about the vaccine, take a look at @EmergencyDocs COVID-19 Vaccine Information Center: www.emergencyphysicians.org/COVIDVaccine

Sample Letter-to-the-Editor

You should personalize and tailor the sample letter-to-the-editor for local media. Typical word count for letters is around 150 words. The most effective approach is to write in direct response to a relevant article written by that publication within seven days. The [ACEP Public Relations team](#) can assist with customizing the letter and identifying appropriate contact emails for news outlets in your community.

Dear Editor,

As an emergency physician in [community name], I'm grateful that I [received/will soon receive] the COVID-19 vaccine so I can stay protected and continue to treat our community members.

I encourage all adults to get vaccinated once they are eligible. The vaccine is safe and effective. In clinical trials, both of the available vaccines prevented more than 90 percent of COVID-19 cases. Still, the vaccine is not an instant fix. It is possible, once you're vaccinated, to become infected without symptoms and unknowingly transmit the virus to others. After receiving the vaccine, everyone should continue to follow local guidelines including wearing a mask in public and social distancing.

This has been a tough year for all of us, but we're nearing the end. Vaccination is a necessary step in ensuring we can help to reduce the spread of the virus, end the pandemic, and return to our usual way of life.

[NAME] is an emergency physician practicing in [CITY, STATE] and a member of [ACEP CHAPTER]

Frequently Asked Questions

The following is a frequently asked questions (FAQ) document to provide additional, more in-depth answers for patients about the COVID-19 vaccine. You can also find the FAQ on ACEP's COVID-19 Vaccine Patient Information Center: www.emergencyphysicians.org/COVIDVaccine.

How will the COVID vaccination be given?

The available vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna require two doses, 21 and 28 days apart respectively. You need to get the same subsequent vaccine injection (either Pfizer or Moderna) each time. If you miss the exact date for your second injection, you should get it as soon as possible. You can expect your immunity to become active two or three weeks after the second injection.

It is expected that in the coming months additional vaccines from other companies will be available and only require a single dose.

Scientists are investigating how long immunity lasts and if people will need a booster in a year or so.

While both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are highly effective at preventing serious illness from the virus, they should not be considered treatment if you currently have COVID-19. If you do [contract the virus](#), you still need to see a medical provider to get proper treatment.

How does the vaccine rollout work?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) approved a set of recommendations from a panel of independent experts advising the agency on the rollout of the Pfizer and the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. While states are not required to follow the CDC's recommendations, most probably will. Ultimately, state and local health departments will determine who will be eligible for vaccination in each phase.

Who are the first eligible groups to be vaccinated?

Health care workers—including emergency physicians, nurses, and others on the frontlines of battling the pandemic—will be eligible first, along with elderly people living in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. The vaccine will be available for this group in mid- to late-December.

Next will likely be essential workers—those who work in food and agriculture, manufacturing, law enforcement, education, transportation, corrections, emergency response and other sectors. These individuals are at increased risk of exposure to the virus often because their jobs preclude them from working from home. These workers also are disproportionately Black and Hispanic—populations that have been hit especially hard by the virus.

After essential workers, the next groups recommended by the CDC committee are adults with medical conditions that put them at high risk of infection and people over the age of 65.

Keep in mind that while these are national recommendations, each state may have slightly different determinations about who falls into each category. Also, states don't need to reach everyone in tier 1 group before moving on to the next, according to the CDC advisory committee.

When will it be available to the broader public?

Adults who are not in the tier 1 groups—healthy adults under 65 who don't work in health care or otherwise qualify as essential workers—should have access to the vaccine by May or June, depending on the volume of the nation's supply. By late spring/early summer, we expect two more vaccines (from Johnson & Johnson and Astra Zeneca) to be available.

At this point, neither the Pfizer nor Moderna vaccine have been tested in children so currently the vaccine is only available for adults. Likewise, the clinical trials did not include pregnant women. So those who are pregnant or breast feeding should talk with their physician about getting vaccinated.

Where can I get the vaccine?

While individuals who come to the emergency department or an urgent care center may be vaccinated (once it's ready and available for their respective group), it may be easier for your primary care provider, pharmacist, or local health department to follow up with you about getting the second dose.

Can I choose which vaccine I get?

This depends on a number of factors, including the supply in your area at the time you're vaccinated and whether certain vaccines are found to be more effective in certain populations, such as older adults. At first, the only choices will be the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine. You need to get the same shot (either Pfizer or Moderna) each time.

By late spring/early summer, we expect two more vaccines from Johnson & Johnson and Astra Zeneca to be available.

Is it free?

Yes, the vaccine is free, although you may want to check with your health insurer about whether they will cover the cost to administer the vaccine.

How do I know it's safe and effective?

As with all vaccines, clinical trials rigorously evaluated the COVID-19 vaccine to generate scientific data and other information for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to determine their safety and effectiveness. Both vaccines prevented more than 90 percent of COVID-19 cases, and even those that did contract the virus only had mild symptoms.

While “Project Warp Speed” removed the barriers and time associated with reporting and other logistical barriers, the companies still had to follow the FDA’s usual vaccine approval process to ensure they provide the appropriate protections and meet all required safety measures. Each company’s application to the FDA included two months of follow-up safety data from Phase 3 of clinical trials conducted by universities and other independent bodies. In that phase, tens of thousands of volunteers got a vaccine and waited to see if they became infected, compared with others who received a placebo. No serious safety concerns were reported in any of the vaccines.

Even after a vaccine is authorized or approved for use, there are vaccine safety monitoring systems that watch for adverse events or possible side effects. This continued monitoring can pick up on possible side effects that may not have been seen in clinical trials. If an unexpected adverse event is detected, experts quickly study it further to assess whether it is a true safety concern. Experts then decide whether changes are needed in the vaccine recommendations.

One of these systems is the CDC’s voluntary [V-SAFE program](#). V-SAFE will use text messaging and web surveys for the CDC to check in with those who received the COVID-19 vaccine to see if health problems arose following vaccination. The system also will follow up via phone with anyone who reports medically significant side effects.

What are the side effects?

Some participants in both Pfizer’s and Moderna’s trials experienced typical mild viral symptoms including fever, muscle aches, bad headaches, and fatigue after receiving the shots, but the side effects generally did not last more than a day. You may have stronger symptoms 24 hours after the second dose. Preliminary data suggests that, compared with most flu vaccines, the COVID-19 shots have a somewhat higher rate of such reactions, which are almost always normal signs that the body’s immune response is kicking in.

A small number of those first vaccinated had an allergic reaction following the injection. Therefore, we recommend that those with a history of significant allergic reactions or anaphylaxis check with their physicians before receiving the vaccine.

Researchers and government officials will continue to monitor those who have received the vaccine to study potential side-effects and determine if we need to adjust our current vaccine recommendations. Despite the chance of possible side effects, the vaccine is a safe and critically necessary step in ensuring we, as a society, can help to reduce the spread of the virus, end of this pandemic, and return to our usual way of life.

I had COVID-19 already. Do I need the vaccine?

Yes, you should still plan on getting the vaccine, but you should wait until those with a greater health risk receive theirs first. Although people who have contracted the virus do have immunity—called

natural immunity—it is unclear how long it lasts. Some early evidence seems to suggest that natural immunity may not last very long. Regarding vaccination, we won't know how long immunity lasts until we have more data on how well the vaccine works.

After I get vaccinated, can I still spread the virus?

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are very effective at preventing serious illness from the virus, however, it is possible for those who have been vaccinated to get infected without developing symptoms and unknowingly transmit the virus to others.

Once I get vaccinated, do I still need to wear a mask and socially distance from others?

Yes, once you get vaccinated you should still plan to [wear a protective mask](#) when in public and [avoid close contact with others](#). It takes several weeks for your body to build an adequate protective response, so you will need to continue pre-vaccine mitigation efforts during this transition time. Experts need to understand more about the protection that the COVID-19 vaccine provides before making a recommendation about when you no longer need to wear a mask and socially distance even after your immunity kicks in due to the silent transmission factor. Other elements, including how many people get vaccinated and how the virus is spreading in communities, will also affect this decision.

How many people need to get vaccinated to have herd immunity?

Experts do not know what percentage of people would need to get vaccinated to achieve herd immunity to COVID-19.

“Herd immunity” is a term used to describe when enough people have protection—either from previous infection or vaccination—that it is unlikely a virus or bacteria can spread and cause disease. As a result, everyone within the community is protected even if some people don't have any protection themselves. The percentage of people who need to have protection in order to achieve herd immunity varies by disease.

Where should I go if I have more questions?

You can visit ACEP's [COVID-19 Vaccine Patient Information Center](#), the [CDC's COVID-19 vaccine page](#), or visit the website of your state's department of health if you have additional questions.