



Vaccine News Central

December 9, 2020

COVID-19 Vaccine: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. When will the COVID-19 vaccine be available?

In the United States, the COVID-19 vaccine approval is expected to take place within the next two weeks. The State of Connecticut has allocated hospitals, including Rockville General Hospital (RGH) and Manchester Memorial Hospital (MMH) with a limited number of vaccines, in anticipation of approval, for use. Each week, ECHN will receive additional supply of the vaccines which will be administered according to the State's Phase 1 Implementation Plan.

2. Which COVID-19 vaccine will be offered to ECHN employees and is it mandatory for employees to receive it like the flu shot?

Initially, ECHN will be administering the Pfizer vaccine, which is a 2-shot series given approximately 21 days apart.

We also will strongly encourage, but will not mandate, that employees who qualify, receive the vaccine. However, the State will require a signed waiver for employees who decline the vaccine. ECHN's corporate parent, Prospect Medical, has a national systemwide team that meets regularly to prepare for the vaccine. We will prioritize the availability of the vaccine to our staff based on exposure risk and the Food & Drug Administration's (FDA) emergency use authorization guidelines.

3. Which employees will be offered the vaccine first?

The State of Connecticut is determining the various phases of deployment for vaccines which every hospital will follow. The first phase will prioritize those who work with direct patient care or those whose work responsibilities require them to be on site to support clinical care. Scheduling will be implemented in a fair and transparent way and will also include members of our Medical Staff, EMS/First Responders and possibly long-term nursing facilities in our community.

4. How do I know if I am in Phase 1 and how do I schedule an appointment?

ECHN will provide the State of Connecticut a list of all ECHN employees with their email addresses who meet the Phase 1 criteria. Then, each employee will receive an email with instructions on how to register for an appointment. If any employee is declining the vaccine, the employee will need to sign a waiver of declination. ECHN is currently working to determine the dates/times of the vaccines and solidify vaccinators and registrars to ensure the vaccination clinics are successful.

5. If I only get the first vaccine shot, will I still be protected from the virus?

No. You will not be protected if you only receive the first Pfizer vaccine shot. This is a 2-shot series given approximately 21 days apart. Both shots will need to be received in order to develop the immunities to the virus. Vaccines typically require a few weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination with the first shot. Since the Pfizer and Moderna shots require two shots administered three weeks apart, an additional 7-14 days are required after the second dose to provide strong and enduring protection. A third COVID-19 vaccine, by Jansen, is currently in Phase 3 clinical trials in the US and will require one shot.

6. Will there be a cost for the vaccine?

The vaccines will be offered at no cost to ECHN employees, Medical Staff and community front line healthcare workers at this time. However, there may be cost to the general public for the administration of the vaccine in future phases.

7. Is the vaccine safe?

Currently, there are no known long-term effects of receiving the vaccine according to the FDA and clinical trials. Short-term side effects can occur in some recipients and are considered minor. The FDA will continue to monitor people who receive the vaccine for any safety issues and ECHN will provide additional resource information as released by the CDC, FDA or manufacturer of the vaccine.

8. What are the side effects?

The CDC has not yet released its official finding on side effects, although there are no known long-term effects and only minor short-term side effects according to clinical trials. Side effects from the vaccine may include soreness, redness and swelling at the injection site. In addition, fever, muscle aches and headaches can develop after administration of the COVID-19 vaccine. Symptoms typically go away on their own within a couple of days. As with any medicine or vaccine, there is always a very remote chance that the vaccine can cause a severe allergic reaction, other serious injury, or death, but that is extremely rare.

Report any side effect to your organization. CDC and the FDA encourages the public to report side effects. You can visit the [VAERS](#) (Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System) site to make a report.

9. What if I have COVID-19, a respiratory illness or am on quarantine?

You should wait until your symptoms have resolved or you have been removed from quarantine restrictions before you receive your COVID-19 vaccination. ECHN will address these concerns on a case by case basis.

10. Given the side effects, how can we administer to all front-line staff at once?

ECHN will work with departmental managers to ensure we stagger vaccinations within departments.

11. Will COVID-19 vaccines give you COVID-19?

No. None of the COVID-19 vaccines currently under Emergency Use Authorization by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) use live or attenuated virus strains that cause COVID-19. Instead, the vaccine utilizes [mRNA](#) to code for the surface protein to elicit an immune response. The vaccine is preservative free. mRNA vaccines are being held to the same [rigorous safety and effectiveness standards](#) as all other types of vaccines in the United States.

There are several different types of vaccines in development. However, the goal for each of them is to teach our immune systems how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19. Sometimes this vaccination process can cause symptoms, such as fever, but these symptoms are normal and are a sign that the body is building up its immunity. If your body develops an immune response, which is the goal of vaccination, there is a possibility you may test positive on some antibody tests. Antibody tests show whether you had a previous infection and that you may have some protection against the virus. Experts are currently looking at how COVID-19 vaccination may affect antibody testing results.

It typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination. That means it's possible a person could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and get sick. This is because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection. For information, please visit the [CDC site on vaccine benefits](#).

12. Can I still get/spread COVID-19 after I've been vaccinated?

Yes, it's possible.

There are three potential reasons why contracting & spreading COVID-19 can occur after being vaccinated:

- a. The vaccine is 90 percent effective, which means there is a small chance you could encounter the virus and become sick.
- b. It typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity after receiving a vaccination. That means it's possible to become infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 before or after vaccination because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection.
- c. The vaccine may provide neutralizing antibodies to prevent severe disease and complications but may not provide the sterilizing immunity required to prevent transmitting the virus to someone else. It is not yet clear if the COVID-19 vaccines can produce sterilizing immunity.

13. Will people who have gotten sick with COVID-19 still benefit from getting vaccinated?

Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that re-infection with COVID-19 is possible, people may be advised to get a COVID-19 vaccine even if they have been sick with COVID-19 before. At this time, experts do not know how long someone is protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. The immunity someone gains from having an infection, called natural immunity, varies from person to person. Some early evidence suggests natural immunity may not last very long. For information, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/vaccine-benefits/facts.html>

14. Will I need to quarantine after getting the vaccine?

No. The COVID-19 vaccine does not increase your risk of spreading the virus. However, it is unclear if the vaccine will provide sterilizing immunity and prevent transmitting COVID-19. The same self-quarantining practice should be followed if you feel you have recently been exposed to someone who has COVID-19, or if you have COVID-19.

15. Can I stop wearing my mask and other PPE if I get vaccinated?

No. You must continue to wear your mask and other PPE. This vaccine is an added level of protection for both yourself, your patients and other staff who have not yet received the vaccine.

16. Is it safe to receive the vaccine if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?

According to the CDC, "Evidence suggests that pregnant women are potentially at increased risk for severe COVID-19-associated illness and death compared to non-pregnant women, underscoring the importance of disease prevention in this population. Given the predominance of women of child-bearing potential among the healthcare workforce, a substantial number of healthcare professionals are estimated to be pregnant or breastfeeding at any given time. Currently, there are no data on the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines in these populations to inform vaccine recommendations. Further considerations around use of COVID-19 vaccines in individuals who are pregnant or breastfeeding will be provided once data from Phase III clinical trials and conditions of FDA Emergency Use Authorization are reviewed." <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs/vacc-specific/covid-19/clinical-considerations.html>

17. Where is the documentation of staff vaccinations/declinations stored?

The State of Connecticut is requesting all hospitals to initiate Phase I by utilizing the State sponsored Vaccine Administration Management System (VAMS). In utilizing this secure and HIPAA compliant database, we are required to submit all names and email addresses into this system to document vaccinations or declinations.

18. How long will the COVID-19 vaccine be effective once I receive it?

It is unclear at this time how long the protection of the vaccine can last.

19. What can I do to help protect myself from becoming infected with COVID-19 while a vaccine is unavailable to me?

You should cover your mouth and nose with a mask always while at work, avoid close contact with people who are sick, stay six feet away from others, avoid crowds, and wash your hands often.

20. How can I learn more?

Ask your healthcare provider, call your local or state health department, or contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at 1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO) or visit CDC's vaccine website: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines