

Frequently Asked Questions

Who can get the vaccine?

Effective Monday, March 29, anyone age 18 years or older is now eligible for all COVID-19 vaccines and anyone who 16 years or older is eligible for the Pfizer vaccine in Louisiana. Those 18+ can get the Johnson & Johnson and Moderna vaccine.

How can I schedule?

- We are now offering scheduling for new appointments in limited quantities, on a first-come, first-served basis to members of our community who are eligible.
- An appointment is required to receive a vaccination. Those without an appointment will be turned away.
- To schedule, visit OchsnerL.G.org/vaccine.
- You may also call 1-855-206-9675 to schedule an appointment.
- Patients who have already received their first dose will receive their second dose as scheduled. This appointment must remain on the schedule as previously scheduled and should not be moved to a different day, time or location.
- We appreciate your willingness to be part of the solution to end this pandemic.

Are there other places I can receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

- Yes! Each week, the Louisiana Department of Health sends a limited supply of vaccines to pharmacies across the state. Patients should contact a participating location to make an appointment or to be added to the waiting list. An appointment is required. A full list of participating pharmacies can be found at ldh.la.gov/covidvaccine-locations

I need to reschedule my second dose appointment. What do I do?

- We ask that patients keep their second dose appointments as they are scheduled, but we understand that sometimes appointment times no longer work. If you must change your second dose appointment, please call 1-855-206-9675.

What if I don't have an appointment, can I still get the vaccine?

- You must have a scheduled appointment to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Walk-ups will not be accepted. **Why?** Due to the complex storage and limited time constraints with the COVID-19 vaccine, we want to ensure we are efficiently utilizing the vaccine to avoid any waste.
- Those who meet the eligible criteria must have a scheduled appointment at the designated location to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. A full list of the criteria can be found at covidvaccine.la.gov.

Is the vaccine safe for my age group?

- Following guidelines from the FDA emergency use authorization (EUA), no one is excluded from receiving the vaccine as there are no medical contraindications except for a severe allergic reaction to this vaccine or any of its components.
- Because the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine require two doses, we will schedule the second dose at the same location with the appropriate length of time between visits. *You must be able to attend the second appointment in order to schedule the first.*
- Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine is a one-time dose.

I'm an Ochsner patient and live in a different state. Can I still receive the vaccine since I met the criteria?

- We encourage you to check your state's department of health website for vaccine eligibility criteria, as it may be different than Louisiana.

How long will the vaccine last?

- Since this is a novel, *or new*, virus, we are still unsure how long the vaccine antibodies will last. We are closely monitoring the research as more data becomes available.

What are the possible side effects of the vaccine?

- Like the flu shot, the vaccine is administered into a large muscle in the upper arm or thigh. As is the case with any vaccine, allergic reactions may occur. Some may experience mild fever, soreness, muscle aches, headaches, chills, fatigue/ tiredness, muscle or joint pain, redness and/or swelling at the site of administration. These are signs of an immune response to the vaccine and expected in some patients.
- Based on data reported from the FDA emergency use authorization(EUA), possible side effects have been more prominent after the second dose.
- If you have pain or discomfort, you can take your normal pain reliever or talk to your pharmacist about taking an over-the-counter medicine, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen.
- To reduce pain and discomfort where you got the shot, you can apply a clean, cool compress over the area. To reduce discomfort from fever, drink plenty of fluids.

What happens if I feel ill after receiving the vaccine?

- While extreme serious reactions to the vaccine are rare, you should seek medical care if:
 - you experience a **severe allergic reaction** call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room
 - the redness or tenderness where you got the shot increases after 24 hours
 - your side effects are worrying you or do not seem to be going away after a few days
 - If you are experiencing an emergency, call 911.
 - Report side effects to [FDA/CDC Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System \(VAERS\)](#). Reporting instructions are included in Fact Sheet you received when you got your vaccine.

Will I still have to mask and social distance after I get the shot?

- Yes. Remember, it takes time for your body to build protection after any vaccination. COVID-19 vaccines that require two shots may not protect you until at least a week after your second shot.
- It's important for everyone to continue using all the tools available to help stop this pandemic as we learn more about how COVID-19 vaccines work in real- world conditions.
- Until we reach herd immunity and the majority of the United States has been vaccinated, we will need to continue to practice social distancing, handwashing and wearing masks. These are the best ways to reduce your chance of being exposed to or spreading the virus until we end this pandemic.

Are there any restrictions, such as quarantining in place, after receiving the vaccine?

- No, there are no restrictions after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine, but you should continue to wear your mask, social distance and practice good hand hygiene.

If I'm exposed to COVID-19 after receiving the vaccine, do I still need to quarantine?

- Fully vaccinated individuals (2 weeks after last vaccine) do not need to quarantine following an exposure.
- Until we reach herd immunity and the majority of the United States has been vaccinated, we will need to continue to practice social distancing, handwashing and wearing masks. These are the best ways to reduce your chance of being exposed to or spreading the virus until we end this pandemic.

I received my first dose and heard vaccine supply is limited. Will I still be able to receive my second dose?

- Patients who have received their first dose are GUARANTEED their second dose regardless of date and should keep their vaccine appointments. This appointment must remain as previously scheduled.
- Second doses are given at the same location a person receives their first dose and the appointment for the second dose will be made during the appointment for the first dose.

What is the difference between the J&J vaccine and the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines?

- The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are two shots each – one shot followed by a booster either 21 or 28 days later depending on the vaccine. Each uses mRNA, or messenger RNA, which gives cells instructions to create a protein like the SAR-CoV2 protein. Once the protein is created, it triggers the immune response leading to the production of antibodies.

- The J&J vaccine uses one shot. It utilizes the adenoviruses which are the same viruses that can cause the common cold. These inactivated/non-infective adenoviruses can be used to deliver DNA, which are instructions for proteins. For the COVID-19 vaccine, researchers swap in a gene from SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) so that the modified cold virus makes the SARS-CoV2 protein, stimulating production of antibodies and additional immune responses to fight off the virus. The process creates an immune memory, which ultimately teaches the body to both recognize and attack the virus.

There a lot of different efficacy percentages being reported by J&J which is confusing. Which efficacy percentage should I be following?

- Based on the data presented to the FDA, J&J's vaccine was 72% effective in the U.S. and 66% effective overall at preventing moderate-to-severe COVID-19.
- All three vaccines are highly efficacious, quite safe and proven to prevent death and serious disease.

The J&J efficacy percentage is lower than the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. Is it just as good?

- Ochsner Health is excited that another COVID-19 vaccine was approved by the FDA for emergency use authorization (EUA) and we are offering this vaccine as we receive allocation from the state. The only way to end this pandemic is to reach herd immunity and vaccines play a critical role in making that happen.
- We urge those who meet the vaccine eligibility criteria to receive any of these vaccines once supply is available to them.
- All three vaccines are safe, effective and proven to prevent death and serious disease.

Would I be more likely to contract COVID-19 due to a lower efficacy from J&J versus if I received the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine?

- All three vaccines are highly efficacious, quite safe and proven to prevent death and serious disease. The best vaccine you can get is the FIRST vaccine you are offered.
- Ochsner will use every vaccine made available to us, including Johnson & Johnson.
- We urge those who meet the vaccine eligibility criteria to receive any of these vaccines once supply is available to them.
- The only way to end this pandemic is to reach herd immunity and vaccines play a critical role in making that happen.

Why are some of the COVID-19 vaccines two shots versus one shot?

- The series and dosing for each vaccine are based on the initial results from the clinical trial data. Just because some vaccines have one shot vs two, doesn't mean that one is less effective than the other.

Does the J&J vaccine have any side effects?

- Common side effects included injection site pain, headache and fatigue, similar to those of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. They are reported be generally mild to moderate, resolving within 1-2 days, with 1% to 2% reported as severe.
- On average, seniors reported fewer and milder side effects than those under 60 years of age.
- FDA said the vaccine has a "favorable safety profile" with "no specific safety concerns identified that would preclude issuance of an EUA."

When will the J&J vaccine be available?

- The J&J vaccine is currently available in Louisiana. The state is in charge of all vaccine allocation and distribution to the regions; therefore, supply may vary week to week based on those allocations.

How long will it take for me to be protected fully after the J&J shot?

- Protection against moderate/severe disease starts about two weeks after you get vaccinated. By four weeks after the shot, data from the clinical trial showed there were no hospitalizations or deaths.

Did the J&J vaccine trials include pregnant women or children?

- The J&J vaccine trial was not tested in children under the age of 18 or pregnant women. J&J plans to start a trial for pregnant women in the near future.

I participated in the J&J trial. Will I find out if I received the vaccine and if I didn't, will I be able to receive it?

- J&J will allow all trial participants who received a placebo to receive the vaccine. They encourage participants who crossover from placebo to remain in the study for up to two years after vaccination so J&J can collect data on "efficacy/effectiveness, safety and immunogenicity."

Can I get routine vaccinations (flu, tetanus, shingles, pneumonia, etc) with my COVID-19 vaccine?

- It is generally recommended to avoid scheduling "routine" immunizations 14 days before or after your scheduled COVID-19 vaccination. If other vaccines are administered, there is no need to alter the COVID-19 immunization schedule or repeat any of the immunizations.

If I'm currently ill with COVID, should I get the vaccine?

- If you currently have COVID-19, you need to follow the CDC isolation recommendations prior to leaving your home and should also have recovered from COVID-19 prior to receiving a vaccine. It is acceptable to delay vaccination for 90 days as immunity to COVID-19 lasts at least that long. Following guidelines from the FDA Emergency Use Authorization (EUA), no one is excluded from receiving the vaccine, even patients who are pregnant or breastfeeding, as there are no medical contraindications except for a severe allergic reaction to this vaccine or any of its components.

If I contract COVID-19 between my first and second dose of the vaccine, should I delay my second dose?

- If you currently have COVID-19, you need to follow the CDC isolation recommendations prior to leaving your home and should also have recovered from COVID-19 prior to receiving a vaccine. If you need to reschedule your second dose of the vaccine, it should be done after you've recovered and at the end of your isolation period (at least 10 days after infection). You can wait up to 90 days to receive your second dose.

What happens if I don't get the booster/2nd shot within the allotted timeframe? Will I still be considered vaccinated?

- To best maximize the efficacy of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine and to ensure an optimal effectiveness, it is highly recommended that you receive the second dose within the specified timeframe as directed by the manufacturer. If you don't receive the second shot, you will greatly decrease the chance of the vaccine working

How much does the COVID-19 vaccine cost?

- COVID-19 vaccines are free. While we remain in the pandemic, the federal government has ensured that vaccines are made available to those in need without cost to the individual. A provider cannot ask a patient for payment, though they can bill insurance for a vaccine administration fee or the federal government if a person is uninsured. A provider may also not bill for a regular office visit to administer the vaccine.

How do I get my vaccine record?

- Once you have received your second dose, we will give you a card indicating that you have completed the COVID-19 immunization. If you lose your card, there are a number of ways to receive record of your vaccine. Within 24 hours of receiving your vaccine, your vaccination record is uploaded to LINKS which is the state vaccination registry. Your primary care doctor can pull this documentation from the LINKS site for you. You can also access it via Apple Health if you have your medical record synced to it. Additionally, you can set up an account at [MyIRmobile.com](https://myIRmobile.com) to access your vaccination records.

How are vaccines approved? What is the process?

- Vaccines are approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) after rigorous and extensive development in laboratories, as well as pre-clinical animal studies and testing on human volunteers, to ensure they are safe and effective.
- Monitoring of the vaccine and how it's produced, including regular facility inspections, must continue for as long as the manufacturer holds a license for the vaccine.
- Additionally, the drug sponsor follows a multi-layered approval process, which includes an investigational new drug application, clinical trials and presentation of data to a special FDA advisory committee.

What is an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA)?

- During a public health emergency, an EUA authorizes the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to make a product available to diagnose, treat or prevent serious or life-threatening diseases.
- The FDA and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have assured the public that no safety or efficacy evaluation steps would be skipped in approving the vaccine.

How long does emergency use last?

- An emergency authorization functions like a temporary approval for the duration of the emergency or until the FDA grants approval. To win full FDA approval for a New Drug Application, the pharmaceutical sponsor will have to submit additional research to fully define the drug's safety and benefit for patients.

Should I take a COVID test before or do I need to be COVID-free before receiving the vaccine?

- You do not need to take a COVID-19 test prior to receiving the vaccine. If you are COVID-19 positive, then it is recommended that you follow the CDC guidelines and isolate for 10 days to limit exposure to others. Once you are out of isolation, you are able to receive the vaccine.

What does vaccine efficacy mean?

- Most commonly used in clinical trials, vaccine efficacy is a percentage measured by calculating the risk of disease among vaccinated and unvaccinated persons.
- Vaccine effectiveness is different and shows the ability of vaccine to prevent outcomes of interest in the "real world."

Now that a vaccine is in emergency use, does that mean that vaccine trials have stopped?

- No, the current vaccine trials will continue for the intended duration which for most trials is 24 months.
- Additionally, we will see more trials for new vaccines and new targeted populations and these new potential trials will need research participants.
- With more than 7 billion people in the world, more trials are needed to help vaccinate the entire world.

I heard some of the vaccine trials were canceled – does that mean they're not safe?

- No COVID-19 vaccine trial has been canceled. Two trials were paused which is normal for all clinical trials to take a closer look at symptoms participants develop to see if there are possible side effects. Sometimes the symptoms have nothing to do with the actual product. This process is in place to ensure that any product brought to the public is as safe as possible. Both trials that were paused were resumed once an independent safety monitoring board deemed the side effects not related to the vaccine.

Can I still become infected after receiving the vaccine?

- None of the vaccines can cause you to test positive via nasal swab or saliva test. This is not a live vaccine and will not cause you to shed virus.
- Some patients may still become infected or develop symptoms following vaccination against COVID-19. They also have demonstrated that your risk of a severe infection that requires you to be hospitalized is greatly reduced following immunization.

Does the vaccine prevent me from getting it or spreading it?

- That is the intent. Vaccines are intended to prevent disease by exposing an individual to a relatively safe and small piece of the virus. This stimulates your body's immune system to mount a response as if it were a true infection, minimizing your risk of infection or disease burden should you encounter the same virus later.
- However, in order to stop this pandemic, we need to use every tool available which includes the immunization, social distancing, handwashing and wearing masks.

Should children get vaccine? What ages is the vaccine for?

- Based on trial data, people ages 16 and 17 are eligible to receive the Pfizer vaccine under Louisiana's eligibility criteria.
- Additionally, there are a few trials that are enrolling various age groups including children ages 12 or greater with new trials for lower age groups in the near future.
- Just like the adult COVID-19 vaccine trials, data from children and adolescent COVID-19 vaccine trials will need to support the safety and efficacy of the vaccines before FDA EUA approval for the population.
- Ochsner will only recommend and administer vaccines that have been evaluated for safety, effectiveness and individual patient needs.
- The benefits of vaccination outweigh the risks of forgoing immunization.

Can I get the vaccine while pregnant or breastfeeding?

- Following guidelines from the FDA, no one is excluded from receiving the vaccine, even patients who are pregnant or breastfeeding. The only medical contraindications to receiving this vaccine are severe allergic reaction after a previous dose of this vaccine or severe allergic reaction to components of this vaccine. Additionally, you may also review this advice from the Society for Maternal Fetal Medicine for those [pregnant or breastfeeding](#). It is important to have this discussion with your physician to determine if this is the best decision for you.

Will the vaccine affect fertility?

- The claim circulating on social media that the COVID-19 vaccine causes female infertility is FALSE and is not supported by any research. Following guidelines from the FDA, no one is excluded from receiving the vaccine, even patients who are pregnant or breastfeeding, as there are no medical contraindications to receiving this vaccine. Ochsner is encouraging all employees and patients to receive the vaccine as soon as it's available to them. You may review this advice from the Society for Maternal Fetal Medicine for those [pregnant or breastfeeding](#).