

COVID-19 VACCINATION - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

SCPHS COVID VACCINE FAQ Current as of 1/21/21

ABOUT THE VACCINE

IS THE VACCINE SAFE AND EFFECTIVE?

After a COVID-19 vaccine is authorized or approved for use by the FDA, many vaccine safety monitoring systems watch for adverse events (possible side effects). This ongoing monitoring can pick up on adverse events that may not have been seen in clinical trials. If an unexpected adverse event is seen, experts quickly study it further to see if it is a true safety concern. Experts then decide whether changes are needed in US vaccine recommendations.

In New York State, an added level of review was established to ensure COVID vaccine safety. Following FDA approval, experts on New York State's independent COVID-19 Vaccine Clinical Advisory Task Force thoroughly review vaccine research before recommending any vaccine to New Yorkers. As of January 21, 2021 two COVID-19 vaccines have currently been approved by both the FDA and New York State's independent Clinical Advisory Task Force: the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine and the Moderna vaccine.

WILL THERE BE ENOUGH VACCINE AVAILABLE FOR EVERYONE?

As of January 21, 2021, two vaccines are authorized and recommended to prevent COVID-19 in the United States. Other vaccines are nearing the end of clinical trials and their manufacturers will soon submit the results of the trials to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for approval.

Manufacturing very large quantities of vaccine takes time. The goal is for everyone to be able to easily get a COVID-19 vaccine when large quantities are available for distribution. While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices have published recommendations for which groups should be vaccinated first, NYS takes these recommendations and determines who is eligible and how vaccine is allocated here. However, NYS is dependent upon the federal government for its supply.

To receive and administer vaccine to county residents, Saratoga County was required to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NYS. The MOU legally requires SCPHS compliance with NYS directives. Failure to follow these directives could mean fines for the county, loss of licensure for public staff, and removal from future NYS vaccine distributions.

DO I NEED TO RECEIVE THE SAME VACCINE FOR THE FIRST AND SECOND DOSES? ARE THE VACCINES INTERCHANGEABLE?

The vaccines are not interchangeable. Individuals should receive only 2 doses of Moderna vaccine or 2 doses of Pfizer vaccine.

IS THERE GOING TO BE ENOUGH SUPPLY TO OFFER SECOND DOSES WITH THE NEWS SAYING THERE ARE NO MORE VACCINES AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL?

As of January 21, 2021, NYS has advised SCPHS that there are sufficient supplies to ensure that all individuals who received one dose of vaccine will be able to receive their second dose of vaccine.

WILL I BE REQUIRED TO GET A VACCINE?

New York State is not mandating the COVID-19 vaccine.

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CAN I GET A COVID-19 VACCINE AT THE SAME TIME AS OTHER VACCINES?

Wait at least 14 days before getting any other vaccine, including a flu or shingles vaccine, if you get your COVID-19 vaccine first. And if you get another vaccine first, wait at least 14 days before getting your COVID-19 vaccine.

If a COVID-19 vaccine is inadvertently given within 14 days of another vaccine, you do **not** need to restart the COVID-19 vaccine series; you should still complete the series on schedule. When more data are available on the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines administered simultaneously with other vaccines, CDC may update this recommendation. This recommendation may be updated.

IS THE VACCINE FREE?

Yes. The COVID-19 vaccines will be available at no cost.

ARE THE VACCINES SAFE FOR CHILDREN?

Studies will need to be conducted testing COVID-19 vaccines in children. To date, no Phase 3 clinical studies of COVID-19 vaccines include children younger than 12 years. Please reach out to your health care provider with specific questions. Additional information can be found on www.cdc.gov.

ARE COVID VACCINES SAFE FOR PREGNANT PEOPLE OR PEOPLE THINKING OF BECOMING PREGNANT?

There is limited research about the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in pregnancy, but pregnant people may choose to get the COVID-19 vaccine if they are in a priority group for vaccination and do not have a medical reason not to be vaccinated. More studies are planned, and vaccine manufacturers are monitoring people in the clinical trials who became pregnant. Based on current knowledge, experts believe that COVID-19 vaccines are not likely to pose a risk for people who are pregnant or trying to get pregnant. If you are pregnant or thinking about becoming pregnant, you should talk to your health care provider about your risk of getting COVID-19 and your risk of severe illness if you get sick. Pregnant people with COVID-19 have an increased risk of severe illness. A vaccine may protect you from severe illness, which could help both you and your fetus.

IS IT SAFE TO GET A COVID-19 VACCINE IF I HAVE AN UNDERLYING MEDICAL CONDITION?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccination is especially important for people with underlying health problems like heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, and obesity. People with these conditions are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19. Please consult with your health care provider if you have specific questions about the COVID vaccine and your health.

IF YOU GET A VACCINE DO YOU NEED A NEGATIVE COVID TEST BEFOREHAND?

No. The CDC does not recommend COVID-19 screening tests before getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

WILL THERE BE SIDE EFFECTS FROM THE VACCINE?

Common side effects that have been observed in clinical studies include fatigue, muscle soreness at the injection site and fever.

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CAN I GET AN ALLERGIC REACTION FROM THE COVID-19 VACCINE?

People can have allergic reactions to any medication or biological product such as a vaccine. Most allergic reactions occur shortly after a vaccine is administered, which is why the CDC recommends that persons with a history of anaphylaxis (due to any cause) are observed for 30 minutes after vaccination, while all other persons are observed for 15 minutes after vaccination. All vaccination sites must be equipped to ensure appropriate medical treatment is available in the event of an unlikely allergic reaction. CDC recommends anyone with an allergy to "any component" of the vaccine not get the vaccine.

WILL THE VACCINE GIVE ME COVID?

No. None of the vaccines being studied are made up of materials that can cause disease. For example, the first vaccine approved by the FDA uses a small, harmless part of the virus's genetic material called 'mRNA'. This is not the virus. mRNA vaccines teach your body to create virus proteins. Your immune system develops antibodies against these proteins that will help you fight the virus that causes COVID-19 if you are exposed to it. That is called an immune response.

IF I ALREADY HAD COVID-19 AND RECOVERED, DO I STILL NEED TO GET VACCINATED?

Yes. CDC recommends that you get vaccinated even if you have already had COVID-19, because you can catch it more than once. While there is otherwise no recommended minimum interval between infection and vaccination, current evidence suggests that reinfection is uncommon in the 90 days after initial infection. Thus, persons with documented acute SARS-CoV-2 infection in the preceding 90 days may delay vaccination until near the end of this period, if desired.

If you are due for a dose of COVID-19 vaccine (or other vaccine) and are acutely ill and/or subject to isolation or quarantine, you should postpone vaccination until you have fully recovered and/or are released from isolation and/or quarantine.

WILL THE VACCINE WORK AGAINST NEW U.K. CORONAVIRUS STRAIN, B.1.1.7?

While evidence indicates that the B.1.1.7 variant is more transmissible (contagious) than other variants, it is not believed to be more resistant to COVID-19 vaccines.

WHO CAN GET THE VACCINE

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE COVID-19 VACCINE?

New York State (NYS) determines who can receive COVID-19 vaccine. As of January 21, 2021, the following groups are eligible to be vaccinated:

- High-risk hospital workers (emergency room workers, ICU staff and Pulmonary Department staff)
- Residents and staff at nursing homes and other congregate care facilities
- Federally Qualified Health Center employees
- EMS workers (including professional and volunteer paramedics and EMTs)
- Coroners, medical examiners, and certain funeral workers
- Staff and residents at OPWDD, OMH and OASAS facilities

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- Urgent Care providers
- All front-line, high-risk public health workers who have direct contact with patients, including those conducting COVID-19 tests, handling COVID-19 specimens and COVID-19 vaccinations
- Individuals administering COVID-19 vaccines, including local health department staff
- All Outpatient/Ambulatory front-line, high-risk health care workers of any age who provide direct in-person patient care
- Staff of nursing homes/skilled nursing facilities who did not receive COVID vaccination through the Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program
- All staff who are in direct contact with patients (i.e., intake staff)
- This includes, but is not limited to,
 - Doctors who work in private medical practices and their staff
 - Doctors who work in hospital-affiliated medical practices and their staff
 - Doctors who work in public health clinics and their staff
 - Registered Nurses
 - Specialty medical practices of all types
 - Dentists and Orthodontists and their staff
 - Psychiatrists and Psychologists and their staff
 - Physical Therapists and their staff
 - Optometrists and their staff
 - Pharmacists and Pharmacy Aides
 - Home care workers
 - Hospice workers
- Individuals Age 65 and older
- First Responders or Support Staff for First Responder Agencies
 - Fire
 - State Fire Service, including firefighters and investigators (professional and volunteer)
 - Local Fire Service, including firefighters and investigators (professional and volunteer)
 - Police and Investigations
 - State Police, including Troopers
 - State Park Police, DEC Police, Forest Rangers
 - SUNY Police
 - Sheriffs' Offices
 - County Police Departments and Police Districts
 - City, Town, and Village Police Departments
 - Transit Units of other Public Authority Police Departments
 - State Field Investigations, including DMV, SCOC, Justice Center, DFS, IG, Tax, OCFS, SLA
 - Public Safety Communications
 - Emergency Communication and PSAP Personnel, including dispatchers and technicians
 - Other Sworn and Civilian Personnel
 - Court Officers
 - Other Police or Peace Officers
 - Support or Civilian Staff for Any of the Above Services, Agencies, or Facilities
 - Corrections
 - State DOCCS Personnel, including correction and parole officers
 - Local Correctional Facilities, including correction officers
 - Local Probation Departments, including probation officers
 - State Juvenile Detention and Rehabilitation Facilities
 - Local Juvenile Detention and Rehabilitation Facilities
- In-person college instructors

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- PreK-12 Schools
 - P-12 school or school district faculty or staff (includes all teachers, substitute teachers, student teachers, school administrators, paraprofessional staff and support staff including bus drivers)
 - Contractors working in a PreK-12 school or school district (including contracted bus drivers)
- Licensed, registered, approved or legally exempt group Childcare Providers
 - Employees or Support Staff of Licensed or Registered Childcare Setting
- Grocery store workers
- Public Transit
 - Airline and airport employees
 - Passenger railroad employees
 - Subway and mass transit employees (i.e., MTA, LIRR, Metro North, NYC Transit, Upstate transit)
 - Ferry employees
 - Port Authority employees
 - Public bus employees
- Individuals living in a homeless shelter where sleeping, bathing, or eating accommodations must be shared with individuals and families who are not part of the same household
- Individual working (paid or unpaid) in a homeless shelter where sleeping, bathing, or eating accommodations must be shared by individuals and families who are not part of the same household, in a position where there is potential for interaction with shelter residents

Proof of identity and eligibility is required to be shown at all vaccination clinics. Such proof may include a driver's license, employee ID card or badge, a letter from an employer, or a pay stub. In addition to age or occupational eligibility, all individuals must be able to document that they live or work in New York State. **Individuals who cannot provide acceptable documentation at the time of their appointment will not be vaccinated.**

WHY CAN'T SCPHS DECIDE WHO GETS VACCINATED? DO WE HAVE TO FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES?

Vaccine distribution is controlled by federal and state governments. To receive and administer vaccine to county residents, Saratoga County was required to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NYS. The MOU legally requires SCPHS compliance with NYS directives. Failure to follow these directives could mean fines for the county, loss of licensure for public staff, and removal from future NYS vaccine distributions.

Vaccination is a core function of SCPHS, and the department has plans to deliver vaccine quickly and efficiently to County residents as eligibility expands and as soon as NYS allows more flexibility and control at the local level. The New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) and the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) are advocating for increased local decision making. Both the federal government and NYS have developed plans to ensure that everyone who wants a COVID-19 vaccine will be able to get one at no cost, as soon as supplies are adequate, regardless of where they live.

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WHERE CAN YOU GET A VACCINE

WHERE CAN I GET A COVID-19 VACCINE?

SCPHS is a member of the Capital Region Vaccination Network, which includes hospitals, federally qualified health centers, ambulatory centers, and pharmacies. As of January 21, 2021, NYS has required members of the network to restrict administration of their vaccine to specific groups.

—> **SCPHS**

SCPHS can only administer vaccine to:

- First Responders or Support Staff for First Responder Agencies
 - Fire
 - State Fire Service, including firefighters and investigators (professional and volunteer)
 - Local Fire Service, including firefighters and investigators (professional and volunteer)
 - Police and Investigations
 - State Police, including Troopers
 - State Park Police, DEC Police, Forest Rangers
 - SUNY Police
 - Sheriffs' Offices
 - County Police Departments and Police Districts
 - City, Town, and Village Police Departments
 - Transit Units of other Public Authority Police Departments
 - State Field Investigations, including DMV, SCOC, Justice Center, DFS, IG, Tax, OCFS, SLA
 - Public Safety Communications
 - Emergency Communication and PSAP Personnel, including dispatchers and technicians
 - Other Sworn and Civilian Personnel
 - Court Officers
 - Other Police or Peace Officers
 - Support or Civilian Staff for Any of the Above Services, Agencies, or Facilities
 - Corrections
 - State DOCCS Personnel, including correction and parole officers
 - Local Correctional Facilities, including correction officers
 - Local Probation Departments, including probation officers
 - State Juvenile Detention and Rehabilitation Facilities
 - Local Juvenile Detention and Rehabilitation Facilities
- In-person college instructors
- PreK-12 Schools
 - P-12 school or school district faculty or staff (includes all teachers, substitute teachers, student teachers, school administrators, paraprofessional staff and support staff including bus drivers)
 - Contractors working in a PreK-12 school or school district (including contracted bus drivers)
- Licensed, registered, approved or legally exempt group Childcare Providers
 - Employees or Support Staff of Licensed or Registered Childcare Setting
- Public-facing grocery store workers
- Public Transit
 - Airline and airport employees
 - Passenger railroad employees

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- Subway and mass transit employees (i.e., MTA, LIRR, Metro North, NYC Transit, Upstate transit)
- Ferry employees
- Port Authority employees
- Public bus employees

—> **Pharmacies can only administer vaccine to:**

- Individuals Age 65 and older

—> **Hospitals, Federally Qualified Health Centers, Urgent Care and Ambulatory Care**

These locations are prioritizing the Phase 1A population but may vaccinate any eligible recipient. Since each institution or facility may have its own protocols, residents are urged to call in advance to verify if the institution or facility is currently offering vaccine to their specific eligibility group. The 1A population consists of:

- High-risk hospital workers (emergency room workers, ICU staff and Pulmonary Department staff)
- Residents and staff at nursing homes and other congregate care facilities
- Federally Qualified Health Center employees
- EMS workers (including professional and volunteer paramedics and EMTs)
- Coroners, medical examiners, and certain funeral workers
- Staff and residents at OPWDD, OMH and OASAS facilities
- Urgent Care providers
- All front-line, high-risk public health workers who have direct contact with patients, including those conducting COVID-19 tests, handling COVID-19 specimens and COVID-19 vaccinations
- Individuals administering COVID-19 vaccines, including local health department staff
- All Outpatient/Ambulatory front-line, high-risk health care workers of any age who provide direct in-person patient care
- Staff of nursing homes/skilled nursing facilities who did not receive COVID vaccination through the Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program
- All staff who are in direct contact with patients (i.e., intake staff)
- This includes, but is not limited to,
 - Doctors who work in private medical practices and their staff
 - Doctors who work in hospital-affiliated medical practices and their staff
 - Doctors who work in public health clinics and their staff
 - Registered Nurses
 - Specialty medical practices of all types
 - Dentists and Orthodontists and their staff
 - Psychiatrists and Psychologists and their staff
 - Physical Therapists and their staff
 - Optometrists and their staff
 - Pharmacists and Pharmacy Aides
 - Home care workers
 - Hospice workers

—> **State Operated Vaccination Clinics** can administer vaccine to anyone eligible, including individuals age 65 and older. To check eligibility, visit <https://am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/>.

We do not have guidance on any population not listed above at this time.

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WHAT ABOUT SECOND DOSES - DO WE HAVE TO GO TO THE SAME PLACE? CAN WE SWITCH VACCINES FOR THE SECOND DOSE?

As of January 21, 2021, NYS requires individuals to obtain their second dose of vaccine at the same location they received their first dose.

WHAT IF I RECEIVED MY FIRST DOSE AT SCPHS, BUT NYS IS NO LONGER ALLOWING SCPHS TO VACCINE MY ELIGIBILITY GROUP - WHERE DO I GET MY SECOND DOSE?

While New York State recently required SCPHS to restrict administration of vaccine to certain eligibility groups, individuals whose first dose of vaccine was administered by SCPHS can still receive their second dose from SCPHS. This includes individuals age 65 and older.

I HEARD THAT THE SARATOGA SPRINGS CITY CENTER IS GOING TO BE A VACCINATION SITE. ARE WE ALL GOING TO HAVE TO DRIVE THERE? ARE THERE OTHER LOCATIONS WHERE VACCINE WILL BE AVAILABLE IN THE COUNTY? WHAT IF I CANNOT DRIVE?

The City Center is one location available to SCPHS for vaccination. Part of being able to vaccinate quickly and efficiently is having redundant capacities to adjust to changing guidance and vaccine supplies. Should SCPHS receive notice that a large number of vaccines, the City Center location will allow for the maximum number of county residents to be vaccinated as quickly as possible. It can be operated 24/7 to support shift workers and others who may not maintain traditional schedules.

In addition to the City Center, there are several potential distribution locations throughout the county that have been previously approved by NYS. SCPHS is working with the Board of Supervisors to ensure accessibility for residents in all part of the county.

SCPHS, with the support of OES and the Sheriff's Department, has delivered and administered vaccinations to persons in locations and settings where they would otherwise be unable to access them. SCPHS, OES and the Sheriff's Department remains ready to do so again, as soon as NYS allows.

HOW DO I GET A VACCINATION APPOINTMENT?

HOW DO I REGISTER FOR A VACCINE?

Individuals eligible for vaccination at SCPHS can register for a SCPHS-operated vaccination clinic at <https://www.saratogacountyny.gov/departments/publichealth/covid19/vaccination-registration/>.

As of January 21, 2021, SCPHS is utilizing the NYS vaccination clinic registration system, so individuals will be taken to a NYS website to register for SCPHS operated clinics.

If there are not any available appointments, individuals will receive a message stating "No Appointments Available." We encourage you to try again at a later time. SCPHS is currently not permitted to provide vaccinations to persons aged 65 and older, healthcare workers or any other groups.

Individuals eligible for vaccination at local pharmacies should reach out to the pharmacies directly.

- As of January 21, 2021, Price Chopper is offering COVID-19 vaccination. Information is available at <https://www.pricechopper.com/covidvaccine/>.
- As of January 21, 2021, Rite Aid is not offering COVID-19 vaccination.

Additional pharmacies, including Rite Aid, may be offering vaccination in the coming weeks. To obtain the most up-to-date information, please visit or call the pharmacy directly.

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All eligible persons, of any group, can be vaccinated at the state-operated clinics. To register for these clinics, call 1-833-697-4829 or visit <https://am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/>. When vaccine supplies are available, the State hotline or website may be able to schedule an appointment for you. If vaccine supplies are not available, the State hotline or website will not be able to schedule an appointment.

ARE WALK-INS ACCEPTED OR DO I NEED TO HAVE AN APPOINTMENT?

You must have an appointment to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Walk-ins are not permitted.

IF I MAKE AN APPOINTMENT AT A SCPHS VACCINATION CLINIC AND CAN'T USE IT, CAN I TRANSFER IT TO SOMEONE ELSE?

No. Appointments cannot be transferred to be used by someone else. In addition to documentation for eligibility, all individuals will be asked for photo identification and may be required to verify additional information to confirm their identity. If you are unable to make your appointment, it should be canceled.

DO I NEED TO BRING PROOF OF ELIGIBILITY WHEN I GO TO MY APPOINTMENT?

Yes. Individuals being vaccinated must bring proof of identity and eligibility to the vaccination site. This may include an employee ID card, a letter from an employer, or a pay stub, depending on the specific priority status. If you are eligible because of your age, bring a government-issued ID that includes your date of birth (like a Driver's License or passport).

CAN I REGISTER SOMEONE ELSE FOR A VACCINATION APPOINTMENT?

Some persons may need assistance in making appointments. However, anyone who is making appointments on behalf of another must have the permission of that person and must make sure that they have correct information regarding eligibility and health status sufficient to answer the pre-screening questions. If an individual obtains an appointment and the information provided in registration is incorrect, they may show up and not be able to receive a vaccine.

Proof of identity and eligibility is required to be shown at all vaccination clinics. Such proof may include a driver's license, employee ID card or badge, a letter from an employer, or a pay stub. In addition to age or occupational eligibility, all individuals must be able to document that they live or work in New York State. **Individuals who cannot provide acceptable documentation at the time of their appointment will not be vaccinated.**

AFTER THE VACCINE

WILL THE VACCINE MAKE ME SICK?

You may not notice any changes in how you feel after getting the shot. But it's also possible to feel a little "under the weather." This can happen after any vaccine. It is the body's immune response to getting vaccinated and a sign that the vaccine is starting to work. After the COVID-19 vaccine, you may have:

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- A sore arm where you got the shot
- A headache
- Chills
- Fever
- Tiredness

Over the counter pain relievers and fever reducers may help. You should feel better in a day or two. If you still don't feel well after two or three days, talk to your health care provider.

HOW LONG WILL VACCINE IMMUNITY LAST?

Researchers do not yet know how long immunity lasts after vaccination. That is why continuing prevention practices like wearing a mask, washing your hands regularly and social distancing will still be important.

I'VE HEARD ABOUT "HERD IMMUNITY." WHAT WOULD IT TAKE TO GET THE POPULATION TO "HERD IMMUNITY" FOR COVID-19?

'Herd immunity' happens when enough people have protection from a disease that it is unlikely that the disease will continue to spread. As a result, the virus won't easily spread among the community. Experts do not know what percentage of people would need to get vaccinated to achieve herd immunity to COVID-19. They also do not know how long the vaccine will protect people. Letting COVID-19 spread through communities naturally would lead to unnecessary infections, suffering and death.

IF I GET A COVID-19 VACCINE, DO I STILL NEED TO WEAR A MASK AND SOCIAL DISTANCE?

Yes. You will need to continue to wear a mask, practice social distancing and good hand hygiene for the foreseeable future as the vaccine gets rolled out in phases.

Experts need more time to understand the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide before deciding to change recommendations on mask use. Other factors, including how many people get vaccinated and how the virus is spreading in communities, will also affect this decision.

WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO GET IMPORTANT, RELIABLE, AND SPECIFIC INFORMATION ABOUT COVID-19 SPECIFIC TO SARATOGA COUNTY?

There are several options to get this information.

- The SCPHS website, <https://www.saratogacountyny.gov/departments/publichealth/>.
- Signing up for the County's CodeRED emergency notification system, <https://public.coderedweb.com/CNE/en-US/BF26DE55718D>
- SCPHS also posts limited information on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/saratogacountypublichealth>.