

## How safe is the vaccine?

### Vaccine safety

The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines are both mRNA vaccines. mRNA technology has been studied for many years. All chemicals in the vaccine are known and safe. mRNA vaccines are held to the same standards as other vaccines available in the U.S. You can't get COVID-19 from the vaccine.

Both vaccines were tested in diverse groups of people. About 30% of U.S. participants were Hispanic, African-American, Asian or Native American. About half were older adults. There were no significant safety concerns identified in these or any other groups.

Veterans can read more about mRNA vaccines on the CDC's website (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/mrna.html>) or scan the QR code at right.



### Side effects of mRNA vaccines

Side effects — such as fever, chills, muscle aches, joint pain, headaches and pain at the injection site — can mirror symptoms of a mild case of the flu and last up to several days.

## What can I expect after vaccination?

Veteran and employee safety are VA's top priorities. COVID-19 vaccination will provide you with strong protection against infection from the virus that causes COVID-19. Still, after vaccination, individuals will need to follow the 3 W's:

- Wear a face covering
- Watch your distance (stay 6 feet apart)
- Wash your hands often

Please continue to follow federal, state and local safety guidelines.

### More information about the vaccine

Scan the code to visit the web pages.

**VA COVID-19 vaccination**  
[www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/](http://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/)



**CDC Coronavirus Vaccine**  
[www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/)



**FDA Emergency Use Authorization**  
[www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/mcm-legal-regulatory-and-policy-framework/emergency-use-authorization](http://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/mcm-legal-regulatory-and-policy-framework/emergency-use-authorization)



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

# Veterans from Communities at High Risk of COVID-19:

## What you need to know about getting the COVID-19 vaccine

*"VA is providing the COVID-19 vaccine first to Veterans and high-risk health care personnel, so we can flatten the curve and stop the devastation that COVID-19 is causing in our communities across the country. I look forward to getting the vaccine as soon as I am eligible."*



**Kameron Leigh Matthews, MD, JD, FAAFP**  
Chief Medical Officer  
Veterans Health Administration

**VA's goal is to provide vaccine for all health care personnel and Veterans who want to be vaccinated in 2021.**

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

**VFW7096.ORG**

## When will vaccines be available for Veterans?

VA worked with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop its COVID-19 vaccination plan. VA's plan is based on five core principles: safety, maximizing the benefit of the vaccine, equity, fairness and transparency.

### Limited vaccine at first

In planning for the early, limited distribution of vaccine, VA considered several factors including the:

- Risk of acquiring infection
- Risk of severe illness and death if infected
- Risk of transmitting the disease to others
- Risk of harm to society if essential workers, including health care personnel, are unable to work



### What is VA's vaccine plan?

Based on these risk factors, VA is first offering the vaccine to health care personnel and vulnerable Veterans — including Veterans living in Community Living Centers and spinal cord injuries and disorders units — and other elderly Veterans.

While VA facilities are following VA's prioritization plan, local flexibility is critical so we can efficiently vaccinate the most people possible while minimizing vaccine waste due to vaccine storage requirements.

## Where can I get the COVID-19 vaccine in 2021?

VA is offering the Pfizer-BioNTech and the Moderna COVID-19 vaccines at facilities nationwide. VA will offer additional vaccines as they are authorized by the U.S Food and Drug Administration.

### When can I get a vaccine?

As more vaccines become available, VA care teams will reach out to eligible Veterans.

Veterans can find more information by contacting their care team or scanning the QR code to sign up for updates on VA COVID-19 vaccination (<https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/stay-informed>).



### Who is at high risk of COVID-19 complications?

Being over age 65 or having certain health conditions increases your risk of severe illness or death due to COVID-19. Read more about high risk conditions: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html)



Some Veterans are also members of communities that have been more impacted by COVID-19. It is important that everyone, especially those at high risk, receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

## Why should I get the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it is available to me?

- You can protect yourself from COVID-19 illness and death.
- A vaccine could help slow the spread of COVID-19 in hard hit communities. *According to the CDC, racial and ethnic minority groups represent 40% of the total U.S. population yet comprise nearly 60% of COVID-19 cases and 50% of COVID-19 deaths.*
- In clinical trials, vaccines were *effective* across age, gender, racial and ethnic backgrounds. The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines reduce the risk of getting COVID-19 by about 95%.
- In clinical trials, side effects of vaccine were consistent across age, gender, racial and ethnic backgrounds.
- The scientific review process was thorough. Scientists reviewed data from vaccine trials that involved tens of thousands of people.
- Widespread vaccination is the best way to get us back to doing the things most important to us.

