



## Costco Health Solutions – COVID-19 vaccine FAQ

### **1. How do the COVID-19 vaccines work?**

There are at least 6 COVID vaccines in late stage clinical trials. Each of these COVID vaccines work differently to achieve the same effect. They work by introducing either a part of the COVID virus or the genetic coding that can be used to make a viral protein. The goal is to train your immune system so that you can fight the live virus effectively.

### **2. I heard the COVID-19 vaccine is developed at unprecedented speed. How is that possible?**

Thanks to the scientific community and the government working closely together, the Pfizer vaccine is now available for use. The Moderna vaccine is pending FDA review and may become the second vaccine available before the end of 2020. The amazing speed of development is made possible by having access to the COVID-19 virus genetic sequence quickly and being able to use cutting edge technology already in development before the pandemic.

The clinical trials that usually take years to get enough participants and data were sped up by the pandemic. There were thousands of participants in the clinical trials to provide enough data for evaluating safety and effectiveness for a large population.

### **3. Is the vaccine safe and effective?**

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is tasked with evaluating the safety and effectiveness of the COVID vaccines. Given the urgency of the pandemic, the FDA is able to grant Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) when there is enough scientific evidence from the on-going clinical trials that a COVID-19 vaccine provides sufficient protection with acceptable side effects. Based on the information available to date, both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have been shown to have about 95% effectiveness in clinical trials.

The Pfizer vaccine is the first to receive the EUA and its distribution began on 12/14/2020. The Moderna vaccine is the second vaccine to receive the EUA and its distribution began 12/21/2020.

### **4. I heard there are different phases for COVID vaccine distribution, can you explain?**

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) provides guidance on how to prioritize vaccine distribution. Here is the high level summary:

Phase 1: Limited doses available, begins 12/14/2020

In the first phase, limited doses will be available. The CDC provided guidance to prioritize high risk health care workers and long term care residents. Individual states can further define their priorities. Distribution of the vaccines will be limited to contractors of the federal or state government. Long term care residents will be vaccinated at on-site clinics supported by federal contracted vendors.

Phase 2: Timing to be determined, likely spring 2021 or later

In the second phase, there will be more vaccine doses available and more likely to meet demand. The priorities will be given to high risk populations and essential workers. Administration for the general public will begin likely at a limited capacity. Costco Pharmacies will receive vaccine allocation directly from the federal government.

Phase 3: Sufficient supply to meet demand

In the third phase vaccine supplies should be sufficient for routine administration. By this time the vaccines should be widely available to the public.

For more detailed information: [https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/downloads/COVID-19-Vaccination-Program-Interim\\_Playbook.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/downloads/COVID-19-Vaccination-Program-Interim_Playbook.pdf)

**5. When will Costco have access to the COVID-19 vaccine for employer groups and general public?**

As stated above, the earliest Costco Pharmacies will receive vaccine allocations from the federal government will be in phase 2 of the distribution plan. The timing of that is still to be determined, likely in spring 2021 or later.

In the meantime you may find it helpful to follow closely the development of your state's vaccination plan. Hospitals and health systems are typically the first in line to receive vaccine allocations.

Resource on state vaccine plans: <https://www.kff.org/report-section/states-are-getting-ready-to-distribute-covid-19-vaccines-what-do-their-plans-tell-us-so-far-state-plans/>

**6. Can Costco provide an on-site COVID-19 vaccine clinic?**

When Costco Pharmacies begin to receive federal vaccine allocations, vaccination will be available by appointment at Costco Pharmacies. Each vaccine has unique storage and expiration requirements. Appointment based vaccination is an important step to reduce wastage.

A number of factors will need to be considered to determine if Costco can provide on-site COVID vaccine clinics. These include the type and amount of vaccine available, storage requirements, and any public health priorities still to be met. We will follow closely the development of federal and state distribution plans and advise employers accordingly. Stay tuned.

- Pfizer vaccine requires ultra-cold frozen storage, OK in fridge x 5 days

- Moderna vaccine requires regular frozen storage, OK in fridge x 30 days
- Other vaccines are expected to require regular frozen storage or refrigeration

**7. Will the COVID-19 vaccine be covered? Is there a member copay?**

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act requires full coverage without cost share of the COVID-19 vaccine, whether the vaccine is provided on an in-network or out-of-network basis. Costco Health Solutions has enabled full coverage of the vaccine and its administration at both in-network and out-of-network pharmacies.

**8. Would employers/payers be charged for the COVID vaccine?**

At the moment, the COVID-19 vaccines are provided by the federal government at no cost to employers and payers. However, employers and payers are responsible for the administration fee. Here are the approximate allowed fees for COVID-19 vaccine administration, modeled after the Center of Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) allowed fee schedule.

	Administrative fee
Single dose vaccine (not yet available)	\$28.39
Two-dose vaccine (e.g. Pfizer, Moderna)	First dose: \$16.94 Second dose: \$28.39

**9. Why is the second administration fee higher than the first administration fee?**

Medicare payment rates for COVID-19 vaccine administration will be \$28.39 to administer single-dose vaccines. For a COVID-19 vaccine requiring a series of 2 or more doses, the initial dose(s) administration payment rate will be \$16.94, and \$28.39 for the administration of the final dose in the series. These rates recognize the costs involved in administering the vaccine, including the additional resources involved with required public health reporting, conducting important outreach and patient education, and spending additional time with patients answering any questions they may have about the vaccine.

**10. How would individuals know to get a second shot or not?**

Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require a two-dose series for the best protection against COVID-19. Only one of the other vaccines in late stage development requires only one dose. The vaccination providers are responsible to educate members regarding the timing of the second dose. Some states also have a reminder system to remind individuals about the second dose.

- Pfizer vaccine dosing schedule: Day 0 and Day 21
- Moderna vaccine dosing schedule: Day 0 and Day 28

**11. Once vaccinated, do individuals still need to wear a mask and maintain social distancing?**

Yes. Until public health authorities (e.g. CDC) have enough data to show the pandemic threat is over and it is safe to relax preventive measures, masking and social distancing will be needed.

## **12. Would an annual COVID-19 vaccination be required to get adequate immunity?**

It is too early to tell. Clinical trials are still on-going to collect more long term data. There will be more recommendations from the CDC once sufficient data is available.

### **Other resources**

- More information on COVID-19 vaccine from the CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>
- Pfizer vaccine EUA fact sheet: <https://www.fda.gov/media/144414/download>

Current as of 12/22/2020 \*\* Please note: information is subject to change as additional details become available