COVID-19 VACCINE
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

ABOUT THE VACCINE

How do COVID-19 vaccines work?
COVID-19 vaccination works by teaching your immune system how to recognize and fight the COVID-19 virus. This protects you from getting infected. Currently, there are one-dose and two-dose COVID-19 vaccines available. Both the one-dose and two-dose COVID-19 vaccines help our bodies develop immunity to the virus that causes COVID-19. Please note: these vaccines do not contain the live virus that causes COVID-19 and the vaccine will not make you sick with COVID-19.

How did they make the vaccine so quickly?
Even though COVID-19 is new, these types of viruses (called coronaviruses) have been studied since the 1960s. This knowledge helped scientists understand the virus to make a vaccine as quickly and safely as possible. The FDA’s Emergency Use Authorization has allowed these vaccines to be used in order to help end the COVID-19 pandemic.

How do I decide which COVID-19 vaccine is best for me?
All three COVID-19 vaccines that are currently available under the FDA’s Emergency Use Authorization, are safe and effective against COVID-19. All three vaccines are highly effective in preventing COVID-19 hospitalization and death. Due to limited distribution and supply of all COVID-19 vaccines, you may not have a choice in the vaccine you receive. The best vaccine is the one you have access to right now. Choosing to receive the vaccine that is made available to you will help keep you, your family, and our communities safe and healthy, and can help us return to normal life.

GETTING VACCINATED

When can I get vaccinated?
The federal and state government is overseeing the distribution of vaccines. Due to limited quantities of the vaccine, the State of California developed a distribution plan based on groups that are at high risk of getting COVID-19. All healthcare organizations must follow this plan (on the right). All Californians will eventually have access to the vaccine.

How will I know if I am eligible to receive the vaccine?
Most people will get vaccinated through their healthcare provider. NEMS will follow California’s COVID-19 Vaccination Plan and as we move through the groups, NEMS will communicate the availability of vaccines to our patients on our website (www.nems.org/covid19) and post vaccine updates on social media. If you have additional questions, please call NEMS at (415) 391-9686 or (650) 550-3923 or (408) 573-9686.

California’s COVID-19 Vaccination Plan

- Healthcare Workers
- Long-Term Care Residents
- Individuals 65 years of age or older
- Those at risk of exposure at work in the following sectors:
  - Education and childcare
  - Emergency services
  - Food and Agriculture
  - Public Transit
  - Custodial
  - Couriers
- Individuals age 16-64 years of age who have an underlying health condition or disability which increases their risk of severe COVID-19
- Individuals who live or work in a congregate residential setting, which includes:
  - Incarceration/detention facility
  - Homeless shelter
  - Behavioral health facility

Please note: Some counties in California have added additional groups who are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Check with your county of residence to verify the full list of groups who are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.
How much does the vaccine cost?
The vaccine will be available to all recipients for free. Any vaccine administration fees will be billed to your insurance provider. For uninsured patients, NEMS will work with federally funded COVID-19 assistance programs to cover any administration fees; you will not pay anything out of pocket for the COVID-19 vaccination. For questions about covering this fee and for patients who are uninsured, please reach out to NEMS Member Services Department at (415) 391-9686 ext. 8160 or (650) 550-3923 ext. 8160 or (408) 573-9686 ext. 8160.

Should I get vaccinated?
COVID-19 vaccines have been shown to help keep recipients from getting COVID-19. Clinical trials have shown that the current vaccines are safe and work well for adults of all ages, races, genders, and ethnic backgrounds. As with any vaccine, there are still certain groups, such as those who are pregnant, breastfeeding, and have a history of severe allergic reactions, that should consult their doctor before receiving the vaccine. If you have questions, please reach out to your NEMS provider.

If I am pregnant or breastfeeding should I get the COVID-19 Vaccine?
Individuals who are pregnant or breastfeeding may choose to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Currently, there is limited data available on the use of the current COVID-19 vaccines in pregnant or breastfeeding individuals. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, please reach out to your NEMS provider. Your provider can guide you through the decision-making process while helping you determine your overall risk of contracting COVID-19 and potential vaccine side effects.

If I have allergies should I get the COVID-19 Vaccine?
CDC recommends that people with a history of severe allergic reactions that are not related to vaccines or injectable medications should get vaccinated. Prior to getting the vaccine, NEMS clinical staff will ask you a series of screening questions to determine if any allergies make it unsafe for you to receive the vaccine. Severe allergic reactions from the vaccine are rare; and those that do occur, primarily occur shortly after receiving the vaccine. NEMS requires all vaccine recipients to be observed for 15 minutes (or 30 minutes if you have a history of allergic reactions) after getting the vaccine to monitor for any allergic reactions. You can also consult with your doctor to see if the vaccine is right for you.

If I have a weakened immune system or take immunosuppressive drugs should I get the COVID-19 Vaccine?
Individuals with a weakened immune system or individuals taking immunosuppressive drugs may choose to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Currently, there is limited data available on the use of the current COVID-19 vaccines in immunocompromised populations. If you are an immunocompromised individual, you should reach out to your NEMS provider for counseling on the vaccine’s safety and effectiveness in immunocompromised populations, as well as the potential for reduced immune responses and the need to continue to follow all current guidance to protect themselves against COVID-19, including wearing a mask, social distancing, and washing hands frequently.

AFTER RECEIVING THE VACCINE

When will I get my second dose?
NEMS clinical staff will let you know if you are receiving a one-dose or two-dose COVID-19 vaccine. If you received a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine, NEMS will help you schedule your appointment for the second dose. You will receive your second dose 3-4 weeks after receiving your first dose, depending on the type of COVID-19 vaccine you receive. You can also download the CDC approved smartphone-based tool, V-Safe, which provides personalized health check-ins and a reminder for your second dose. To download, hold your phone’s camera to this QR code or visit www.cdc.gov/vsafe.

What side effects should I expect after receiving the vaccine?
Common side effects include pain and swelling on the arm where you got the shot, fatigue, headache, chills, nausea and/or fever. For most people, these side effects will last no longer than a day or two. To reduce pain and discomfort where you got the shot, apply a clean, cool, wet washcloth over the area and/or use exercise your arm. To reduce discomfort from fever, drink plenty of fluids and dress lightly. You can also take over-the-counter medicine, such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen, after receiving the vaccine to treat fever, chills, headaches, or muscle aches. Call the doctor if the redness or tenderness where you got the shot increases after 24 hours or your side effects are worrying you or do not seem to be going away after a few days.

Can I stop wearing a mask and social distancing once I get vaccinated?
If you are in public and around unvaccinated individuals with high-risk for severe COVID-19, it’s important to continue to cover your mouth and nose with a mask, wash your hands often, and practice social distancing. Please note, it takes time for your body to build protection after any vaccination. COVID-19 vaccines may not protect you until about 2 weeks after your shot (or until 2 weeks after your second shot if you received the two-dose vaccine); this is when you are considered fully vaccinated. Afterwards, fully vaccinated people can visit with other fully vaccinated people and unvaccinated people from a single household with low-risk for severe COVID-19 indoors, without masks or social distancing.