FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

COVID-19 VACCINES

Now that there are Federal Drug Administration (FDA) approved and recommended COVID-19 vaccines to prevent COVID-19 in the United States, many Harris County residents have questions about the vaccination process. Harris County Public Health has the answers you need to make informed decisions that can help protect your family and your community from infection.

STAY SMART. DO YOUR PART.

Harris County Public Health and National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases

When can my family and I get vaccinated?

There is currently a limited supply of vaccines in the United States. High-risk groups like healthcare workers and long-term care facility residents are the first to receive the vaccine. The goal is for everyone to easily get vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as large enough quantities are available. The vaccine supply will increase in the weeks and months to come. The plan is to have several thousand vaccination providers offering COVID-19 vaccines in doctors' offices, retail pharmacies, hospitals, and federally qualified health centers.

Do I need proof of immigration status or medical insurance?

Vaccines are available regardless of immigration status and you do not need medical insurance. Proof of citizenship, residence, or insurance is not required to get a COVID-19 vaccine administered by Harris County Public Health.

Is the vaccine safe?

The U.S. vaccine safety system ensures that all vaccines are as safe as possible. After thorough testing and authorization for emergency use, the Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines have been shown to be safe and effective for use in people 16 years of age and older as determined by data from the manufacturers and findings from large clinical trials. Vaccination is recommended by healthcare providers around the world.

How much does the vaccine cost?

Vaccine doses purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars will be given to the American people at no cost. However, vaccination providers may be able to charge administration fees for giving the injections. Vaccination providers can get this fee reimbursed by the patient's public or private insurance company or, for uninsured patients, by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund.

Is the vaccine a shot?

The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines consist of two separate doses injected 3–4 weeks apart. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine requires just a single injection.

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Do I need to continue wearing a mask and social distancing after I get vaccinated?

Yes. While experts learn more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide under real-life conditions, it will be important for everyone to continue using all the tools available to us to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, including wearing a mask, washing hands, and remaining at least six feet away from others. Together, COVID-19 vaccination and following COVID-19 prevention recommendations will offer the best protection from getting and spreading COVID-19. Experts need to understand more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide before deciding to change recommendations on the steps everyone should take to slow the spread of the virus. Other factors, including how many people get vaccinated and how the virus is spreading in communities, will also affect this decision.

Who is receiving the vaccines and distributing it?

The state of Texas has released the vaccine to Harris County, and we have partnered with over 1,000 organizations to distribute and vaccinate.

How do we know the vaccine works?

The vaccines have been tested thoroughly. Before the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) determines whether to approve a vaccine or authorize a vaccine, clinical trials are conducted to determine how well it works. This is known as vaccine effectiveness. After the FDA approves or authorizes a vaccine, it continues to be studied to determine how well it works under real-world conditions. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other federal partners will be assessing COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness during the rollout and releasing their finding to the public.