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COVID-19 Vaccine CCSF Employee FAQs

A safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine, coupled with continued preventive measures, is our best tool to end the COVID-19 pandemic and safely reopen San Francisco. **Vaccine supply is currently very limited.** As vaccine supply increases, more people will get the vaccine, including younger people and people at lower risk for complications from COVID-19. Most people will get the vaccine from their healthcare or insurance provider, later in 2021.

We have developed these FAQs to help provide answers with the information we have now. Administration of the vaccine is a quickly evolving process and will result in information changing frequently. Please check the [DHR COVID-19 webpage](#) for employee specific information or sf.gov for general information about COVID-19 and the vaccine.

ABOUT THE VACCINE

Is the vaccine mandatory?

No, but the COVID-19 vaccines are safe and highly effective, and you are strongly encouraged to get the vaccine once it's available.

Do I have to share whether I want a vaccine?

You are not required to share personal health information with your supervisor or other employees, such as whether you want the vaccine or whether you have already received the vaccine. The City may offer employees the opportunity to receive the vaccine, but employees are permitted to decline.

Will City employees be required to receive the vaccine in order to return to their on-site work locations?

Generally, no, but certain types of jobs may have different requirements. Please contact your human resources representative for more information. Again, you are strongly encouraged to get the vaccine once it's available.

Is the vaccine free?

Yes, the vaccine is free (covered by insurance). If you have insurance, your insurance provider may pay a fee for the administration of the vaccine, but you will not pay a copay.

Do I need to take a COVID-19 test before I get the vaccine?

No, you do not need a COVID-19 test before getting a vaccine.

Where is the vaccine coming from?

Doses of the vaccine are being provided by the federal government to state governments. The vaccines being administered in San Francisco were provided by the State of California, the majority of which were directly sent to healthcare providers.

Will I be able to choose which vaccine I get?

No. The vaccine you receive will be based on what your healthcare provider has available. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are almost identical. They are both 95% effective at preventing you from getting sick from COVID-19. Both are two dose vaccines, with several weeks between doses.

Do the first and second vaccination shots need to be the same vaccine (Pfizer and Moderna)?

Two-shot vaccinations aim for maximum benefit and should be from the same vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has updated its guidance to say that people can wait up to 42 days between doses, though the agency still advises individuals to stick to the initial schedule. The original recommended interval was 21 days between doses for the Pfizer vaccine and 28 days for the Moderna shots.

Vaccinating entities are prioritizing second doses to be sure they have supply, instead of starting a new series on another person.

If I have previously contracted COVID-19 should I receive the vaccine?

Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that re-infection is possible, people may be advised to get the vaccine even if they had the virus before. If you're actively sick with COVID-19, wait until you are fully recovered from your infection and review with your health care provider as to best timing.

Is it safe to receive the vaccine if I am pregnant, think I am pregnant, or planning to become pregnant?

According to the CDC, we don't yet have information about how safe it is for people who are pregnant to get a vaccine for COVID-19. However, they do state that if you are breastfeeding or pregnant and are part of a group recommended to receive the vaccine, you may choose to be vaccinated. We suggest you talk with your healthcare provider so you can make an informed decision. For more information on vaccine considerations for people who are pregnant visit [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

What are the possible side effects of the vaccine?

The vaccines may cause side effects in some people. For most people, these side effects will last no longer than a day or two. Possible side effects include:

- On the arm where you got the shot: Pain, redness, and swelling
- Throughout the rest of your body: Fever, chills, headache, tiredness, joint and body aches

To reduce pain and discomfort where you got the shot apply a clean, cool, wet washcloth over the area and use or exercise your arm. To reduce other symptoms, talk to your doctor about taking an over-the-counter medication such as Tylenol or Ibuprofen.

Side effects are a sign that the vaccine is working. They do **NOT** mean you have COVID-19. You can't get COVID-19 from the vaccine. If you have questions about your health after your shot, contact your healthcare provider.

What does it mean to be fully vaccinated? How long will the vaccination protect me?

The vaccines currently available require two shots spaced 3–4 weeks apart, depending on which vaccine you receive. The first shot helps your body recognize the virus and helps prepare your immune system, and the second shot strengthens that immune response. You need both shots to be fully protected. It is strongly recommended that you get both shots.

Clinical trial results have shown that the vaccines are safe and work well for adults of all ages, races, genders, and ethnic backgrounds. Research is not yet complete as to how long the vaccine is effective. This further research will tell us more about how long immunity lasts and if people will need more shots in the future.

Is the vaccine effective against newer strains of COVID?

Current studies have shown that the available vaccines are effective against the newer strains. However, as the COVID-19 virus continues to evolve and develop new strains, there will be ongoing study of vaccine effectiveness. This may include recommendation for changes in the future. With time, the COVID-19 vaccination may even include a booster, though it is too early to know.

Do I still have to practice social distancing and wear a mask after getting the vaccine?

Yes. It's still possible for you to spread the virus after getting the vaccine. The vaccine is designed to stop the virus from making you very sick. We don't yet know if the vaccine will stop you from spreading the virus, but research continues to determine this.

After vaccination, you should continue to follow all public health guidance to protect yourself and others from COVID-19, including wearing a mask, staying at least 6-feet away from others, avoiding crowds, and washing your hands often.

VACCINE NOTIFICATION

Which distribution phase am I in?

The federal and state government developed the vaccine distribution plan and the state has defined the prioritization plan, which San Francisco must follow. The distribution plan has been split into phases, with the general priorities focused on age and job category.

Currently most healthcare providers are still vaccinating people in the phase 1a category (healthcare workers and long-term care residents). **Beginning Wednesday, February 24, 2021 vaccines will be offered to city employees eligible in Phase 1b of the State's prioritization plan.** This includes employees in food and agriculture, education and childcare, and Emergency Services. Emergency Services broadly includes employees involved in emergency response activities and law enforcement as well as frontline workers required to report in person and responsible to maintain critical infrastructure and city operations (ex. Muni operators, safety inspectors, or employees responsible for construction, repair, and maintenance of public infrastructure). Employees serving as disaster service workers and are **required** to report to work in person for their current activation are also eligible. Employees who report to work in person because of preference or convenience are not included at this time.

How will I know when I can get the vaccine?

All employees are encouraged to sign up via the [City's Get Notified vaccine webpage](#) to receive a notification when you are eligible. Once you are notified, visit the [City's Get Vaccinated webpage](#) to schedule an appointment at one of the City's various vaccine sites.

If you live outside of San Francisco and would prefer to receive the vaccine closer to home (if available), register through the State of California's website for possible options at myturn.ca.gov.

Ultimately, as supply remains very limited, you are strongly encouraged to get the vaccine when and wherever it is offered to you.

Does my Primary Care Physician have information on my vaccine eligibility?

Currently, primary care physicians (PCPs) are not administering the vaccines yet, so they don't know when or how you can get the vaccine. It is still the end goal that you will be able to get your vaccine through your primary care physician or local pharmacy. However, during this time of limited vaccine supply, the major health systems and hospital networks continue to manage vaccine administration. In San Francisco, the health systems Dignity Health, Kaiser Permanente, Sutter Health, and University of California San Francisco (UCSF) are all doing their part to administer the vaccines to persons meeting the State's guidelines. Note, these guidelines are under continuous review and are subject to change.

The Department of Human Resources and the San Francisco Health Services System are working closely with healthcare providers to identify City employees eligible to receive the vaccine in early phases before the general public.

How do I register for a hospital network patient portal?

Most providers or primary care physicians are part of a health system or hospital network. Every major local health system has a patient portal. If you've had special tests, lab work, or other services done in the past and you signed up with their patient portal, then you are most likely already registered in their system or can register now using one of the links below. Ask your primary care doctor how you can register for their participating network hospital patient portal. As providers stand up vaccine services – those groups or practices will also use or activate their patient portals.

Alternatively, if you know which network you are part of, you can sign-up for their patient portal here.

- Sutter Health: <https://mho.sutterhealth.org/>
- UCSF Health: <https://www.ucsfhealth.org/mychart>
- Dignity Health: <https://www.dignityhealth.org/my-home/my-care-dignity-health>
- Kaiser Permanente: <https://healthy.kaiserpermanente.org/sign-on#/signon>

What do I do if I do not have a primary care physician?

If you do not have a primary care physician, go the [City's Get Notified vaccine webpage](#) to get on a citywide list and to be notified for when it's your turn to get the vaccine.

VACCINE DISTRIBUTION

Who is responsible for determining who gets the vaccine first?

Most of the decisions regarding vaccine allocation are driven by the state and federal governments, including the timing and amount of vaccine a county receives. California has developed a distribution plan for the vaccine, which San Francisco is required to follow. The distribution prioritizes both the risk of exposure to COVID-19 and the likelihood of a more severe disease should someone contract COVID-19.

Where will I receive the vaccine?

During this time of limited vaccine supply, the major health systems and hospital networks along with the City's designated high-volume vaccination sites will manage vaccine administration. In San Francisco, the health systems Dignity Health, Kaiser Permanente, Sutter Health, and University of California San Francisco (UCSF) are all doing their part to administer the vaccines to persons meeting the state and local guidelines. The high-volume vaccination sites are listed [here](#).

I work in San Francisco, but I am not a resident. Where will I be able to receive the vaccine when I am eligible?

When you are eligible, you can get the vaccine in San Francisco or where you reside, depending on appointment availability.

How is the vaccine administered?

The vaccine is shipped directly to healthcare providers, including the Department of Public Health, which is a healthcare provider in the City.

Most people will get the vaccine from their healthcare provider (Kaiser, Sutter, UCSF, etc.) or a local participating pharmacy such as CVS and Walgreens, later in 2021. The Department of Public Health is a healthcare provider for clinics and hospitals within the San Francisco Health network (Southeast Health Center, Castro-Mission Health Center, Chinatown Public Health Center etc.) not for city employees.

If I am eligible for the vaccine can my family members who are not eligible be vaccinated to?

No, your family members will have to wait until the State moves to their priority group and sufficient vaccine is available to schedule their appointment.

How is San Francisco providing vaccines to its' most vulnerable?

San Francisco is following the California guidelines in administering the vaccines as they become available. The Community Vaccine Advisory Committee is providing input and feedback to the planning efforts and resolving barriers to equitable vaccine implementation and decision-making. See CDPH's [committee activities page](#) for the upcoming meeting schedule and all meeting materials.

In partnership with San Francisco healthcare providers, which are receiving the majority of the vaccine doses from the state, the City is facilitating the quick and efficient delivery of vaccines through high-volume vaccine sites, neighborhood vaccine access sites, community clinics, pharmacy partnerships, and mobile vaccination teams. High-volume sites will serve anyone, regardless of their health coverage status or provider. These sites help the City provide convenient and comfortable ways for as many people as possible, particularly in those neighborhoods disproportionately affected by the pandemic, to receive the vaccine when **eligible**. Eligibility for receiving the vaccine is determined by the [state's prioritization plan](#).

[Click here](#) for more information on San Francisco's vaccination sites, eligibility, and appointment availability.

How can I volunteer to support the City's vaccination efforts?

The City is seeking volunteers to help support and manage high-volume vaccination sites and community clinics. Volunteers will help maintain traffic flow, greet visitors at vaccination sites, provide general information about the vaccine by distributing pamphlets and informational documents, support administration staff at registration desks, assist staff with cleaning and stocking vaccine stations, and more. Volunteers should be able to stand and walk for at least four hours a shift.

To sign up to help support this response, complete the [volunteer registration form](#) and book a [processing appointment](#) (select *** Emergency Volunteer Center ***). The Emergency Volunteer Team will reach out to you, as opportunities become available. For more information, please visit: <https://sfdhr.org/covid-19> or contact the Emergency Volunteer Center at DHR-EVC@sfgov.org.

COMPENSATION AND LEAVE

Will I receive additional COVID-related sick leave?

At this time plans to provide City employees with additional COVID-19 paid leaves benefits are undetermined.

Can I use sick leave when I go to my vaccination appointment?

Yes. Employees requiring time off work for COVID-19 vaccinations can use any accrued sick leave, or their allocation of COVID-19 sick leave allocation (COV), for their own medical appointments or those scheduled for an immediate family member or dependent. Use of paid leave for vaccination appointments must be reasonable.

If I get sick from the vaccine and must take time off from work, can I use the City provided COVID sick leave?

Yes. This is a very well tolerated vaccine, and reactions, if any, are seen more often after the second dose. Employees can use a portion of their one-time allocation of COVID-19 sick leave or personal accrued sick leave for side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

City and County of San Francisco Vaccine FAQs: <https://sf.gov/sites/default/files/2021-02/VaccineFAQs-icons-020921-v2.pdf>

CA Department of Public Health Healthcare Workers' FAQ:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/HealthWorkersVaccineFAQs.pdf>

COVID-19 Vaccination dashboard: <https://data.sfgov.org/stories/s/COVID-19-Vaccinations/a49y-jeyc>