



COVID-19 Vaccine FAQs

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ABOUT THE VACCINE

How do I get the COVID-19 Vaccine?

Appointments are widely available throughout the City and many sites also offer drop-in availability. Employees can schedule an appointment online at: <https://sf.gov/getvaccinated>.

To learn more about vaccination locations in other counties, visit <https://www.vaccines.gov/> or text your zip code to 438829 or call 1-800-232-0233 to find vaccine locations near you.

Why should I be vaccinated?

Getting vaccinated will keep you, your family, and your community safe and healthy and is the best tool available to put an end to the pandemic. Getting vaccinated also helps protect those who are unable to get vaccinated, including younger children and those with conditions that put them at greater risk for serious, life-threatening COVID-19 infections.

What is the cost for the vaccine?

The vaccine is free (covered by your insurance). If you have insurance, your insurance provider may pay a fee for the administration of the vaccine, but there is no out of pocket cost to you.

How does the COVID-19 Vaccine work?

Vaccines work with your immune system by allowing your body to make antibodies that will be used to fight the virus if you are exposed. The vaccine helps the body fight back and protect you from severe illness and death. Visit the [CDC COVID-19 webpage](https://www.cdc.gov/covid19/) to learn more.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccines have been thoroughly tested and are safe and effective. Before being authorized for use, all COVID-19 vaccines were tested in clinical trials involving tens of thousands of people of different ages, races, and ethnicities to make sure they meet all health and safety standards. 335 million Americans have now received their COVID-19 vaccine and helped to slow the spread of the pandemic.

All 3 vaccines authorized and recommended in the United States offer very strong protection against COVID-19, especially against hospitalization and death.

[Pfizer-BioNTech](#) series is 2 shots three weeks apart,
[Moderna](#) series is 2 shots four weeks apart,
[Johnson & Johnson Janssen](#) is 1 shot.

When am I considered fully vaccinated?

Fourteen days after completing your final shot of your series.

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).

If I had COVID, do I need a vaccine?

Yes. You can have immunity that does not last and does not protect you from variants. Vaccination is the best way to have continued protection.

Do the vaccines protect us from the variants?

Yes! People who are not vaccinated are more likely to get sick with the Delta variant. How well the vaccines work against the variants is still being studied. However, early studies show that the current vaccines available in the U.S. are highly effective in preventing severe infection (often leading to hospitalization) and death, even against the Delta variant.

Why are fully vaccinated people still getting infected with COVID-19?

There are rare cases when someone who has already been fully vaccinated is infected with COVID-19. These are called “breakthrough infections”. Even though vaccines are highly effective at preventing severe illness and death, no vaccine offers 100% protection. Those vaccinated who test positive for COVID-19 experience less severe symptoms compared to unvaccinated individuals and are much less likely to be hospitalized.

What are the common side effects after COVID-19 vaccination?

Some people have no side effects. Others have reported common side effects after COVID-19 vaccination, like fatigue, muscle pains, joint pains, fever, headaches, soreness and redness at the injection site. Side effects typically occur within the first 3 days of vaccination and more commonly after the second vaccine of the two-shot series. In most cases side effects resolve within 1–3 days of onset. Side effects are a good sign that the vaccine is working to build immunity.

Are there serious long-term side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine?

Serious side effects that could cause a long-term health problem are extremely rare following any vaccination, including COVID-19 vaccination. Vaccine monitoring has shown that side effects generally happen within six weeks of receiving a vaccine dose. For this reason, the FDA required each of the authorized COVID-19 vaccines to be studied for at least two months (eight weeks) after the final dose.

To clarify common misunderstandings: the vaccines do not change your genetic make-up, nor cause fertility issues. There are a few rare side effects, which may help employees choose which vaccine is right for them. A small number of people have had a severe allergic reaction (called “anaphylaxis”) after vaccination, but this is rare. After you get a COVID-19 vaccine, you will be asked to stay for 15–30 minutes so you can be observed in case you have a severe allergic reaction and need immediate treatment. After receiving the J&J/Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine, there is risk for a rare but serious adverse event—blood clots with low platelets. If you have concerns, please discuss with your healthcare provider.

Will I need a booster?

Currently boosters are being considered for people who have weakened immune systems. Ask your healthcare provider if you believe you need a booster. This is an area that may evolve both with the science and the data in the future.

How do I get more information about the safety of vaccines?

The City has expanded the 24/7 Nurse Triage call center to provide confidential conversations with employees. First responders can call **(866) 932-5321**. All other City & County employees can call **(855) 850-2249**.

COMPENSATION REPORTING**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).

If I experience symptoms after getting the vaccine, can I use sick leave?

Yes. Employees can use a portion of their one-time allocation of COVID-19 sick leave or personal accrued sick leave if you experience any side effects related to the COVID-19 vaccine.

VACCINATION AND REPORTING REQUIREMENT

What is the Vaccination Requirement?

To protect the health and safety of all city employees and the public, City employees must be fully vaccinated and report that vaccination status to the City by November 1, 2021, [read the full Employee Vaccination Policy on DHR's COVID-19 webpage](#). Additionally, the San Francisco County Health Officer has issued the [Safer Return Together Health Order No. C19-07y](#) outlining a faster timeline for employees working in high-risk settings.

COVID-19 Vaccination Deadlines	
Employees who are assigned to or routinely work onsite in high-risk settings or other health care facilities	Must receive their final dose of a vaccine regimen <i>no later than September 30, 2021</i> . <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moderna: First shot <i>no later than</i> September 2, 2021; Second shot <i>no later than</i> September 30, 2021.• Pfizer: First shot <i>no later than</i> September 9, 2021; Second shot <i>no later than</i> September 30, 2021.• Johnson & Johnson: First shot <i>no later than</i> September 30, 2021
Employees intermittently or occasionally working in "High- Risk Settings"	Must be fully vaccinated <i>no later than October 13, 2021</i> . <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moderna: First shot <i>no later than</i> September 1, 2021; Second shot <i>no later than</i> September 29, 2021.• Pfizer: First shot <i>no later than</i> September 8, 2021; Second shot <i>no later than</i> September 29, 2021.• Johnson & Johnson: First shot <i>no later than</i> September 29, 2021
All other employees not working in "High-Risk" or other health care settings	Must be fully vaccinated <i>no later than November 1, 2021</i> . <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moderna: First shot <i>no later than</i> September 20, 2021; Second shot <i>no later than</i> October 18, 2021.• Pfizer: First shot <i>no later than</i> September 27, 2021; Second shot <i>no later than</i> October 18, 2021.• Johnson & Johnson: First shot <i>no later than</i> October 18, 2021

What are the exceptions to the vaccination requirement?

Reasons for not getting vaccinated are 1) a sincerely held religious belief that prevents the employee from receiving the vaccine, or 2) a qualifying medical reason, such as a disability, that interferes with the employee's ability to receive the vaccine. Visit <https://sfdhr.org/new-vaccine-and-face-covering-policy-city-employees> for additional exemption procedures.

How do I upload my vaccination status?

Visit <https://sfdhr.org/CV19Status> for detailed instructions on how to submit your COVID-19 Vaccine status via the SF Employee Portal or request assistance from your department human resource professional.

Is my vaccination status HIPAA protected?

It is not a violation of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) for an employer to ask its employees to reveal their vaccination status. HIPAA's privacy rules only apply to HIPAA-covered entities, such as healthcare providers and health plans. The City uses PeopleSoft, one of the most secure and widely-used human resources database tools in the world, to collect and store confidential employee data. Vaccination reporting data will only be seen by a small number of Human Resources professionals.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Safety of COVID-19 Vaccines:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/safety-of-vaccines.html>
- **DHR's COVID-19 webpage:** <https://sfdhr.org/covid-19>
- **City's COVID webpage:** <https://sf.gov/covid-19-vaccine-san-francisco/>
- **Employee Assistance Program:** <https://sfhss.org/eap>