

# **COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ**

*(Dated: 12.10.20)*

## **VACCINE DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL**

- **How many vaccines are under development?**

Multiple COVID-19 vaccines are under development. As of November 24, 2020, large-scale (Phase 3) clinical trials are in progress or being planned for five COVID-19 vaccines in the United States.

- **Why are there different types of vaccine? Why aren't they all the same?**

The government funded as many companies as possible to make vaccines in different ways as we were not sure what would be most effective.

- **What is Emergency Use Authorization?**

The FDA states: In certain types of emergencies, the FDA can issue an emergency use authorization, or EUA, to provide more timely access to critical medical products (including medicines and tests) that may help during the emergency when there are no adequate, approved, and available alternative options.

The EUA process is different than FDA approval, clearance, or licensing because the EUA standard may permit authorization based on significantly less data than would be required for approval, clearance, or licensing by the FDA. This enables the FDA to authorize the emergency use of medical products that meet the criteria within weeks rather than months to years.

EUAs are in effect until the emergency declaration ends but can be revised or revoked as we evaluate the needs during the emergency and new data on the product's safety and effectiveness, or as products meet the criteria to become approved, cleared, or licensed by the FDA.

- **Given how quickly the vaccine was developed, what 'corners were cut' in the process?**

It is not believed that safety was sacrificed but we recognize that a lot of investigation is needed and the first vaccine will not be the end of the vaccine research.

- **What vaccines will be available?**

Initially, the Pfizer vaccine is the first vaccine that is expected to be available.

- **Are there any groups who should not be vaccinated or who were excluded from the study?**

The three main groups excluded from the studies are children under 18 years old; those with immunosuppression; and pregnant or lactating women.

- **What is the recommendation for pregnant or breastfeeding women?**

The EUA will list what individuals are eligible to receive this vaccine. At this time, there is no data for either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines in pregnant women. There is ongoing evidence and guidance that will come along. We cannot make any recommendation as far as receiving the vaccine while pregnant or breastfeeding.

- **What about individuals such as renal failure, dialysis or transplant patients?**

Those with chronic kidney disease and on dialysis they were in the trial. People on immunosuppressive medication were not included. The EUA will list who is eligible.

- **Should I get the vaccine if I have severe allergies?**

Early vaccine experience data may indicate that if you have a history of severe allergic reactions to anything, you may be at increased risk of an allergic reaction to the COVID-19 vaccine. Please inform the individual providing your vaccine prior to vaccination.

- **Is there a minimum age for who will receive the vaccination right now?**

The Pfizer vaccine included about 100 people who were 16 and 17 years old. We do not yet know what the FDA will approve.

- **Does the vaccine stop you from getting the infection?**

We do not know if it prevents getting infection. We do know that it prevents symptomatic infection. We not know if it protects against asymptomatic infection and passing on the virus.

- **Does the vaccine affect your risk of severe disease from COVID-19?**

Yes, individuals who become ill but whom have been vaccinated have been shown to have a significant reduction in risk of severe illness.

- **Can you still carry the virus and pass the virus on to others after vaccination?**

At this time, there is not enough research to tell us that the vaccine stops you from carrying the virus or passing it on the others. Therefore, it is vital to continue following all safety precautions such as PPE and physical distancing.

- **If I have already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine when it's available?**

The CDC states: There is not enough information currently available to say if or for how long after infection someone is protected from getting COVID-19 again; this is called natural immunity. Early evidence suggests natural immunity from COVID-19 may not last very long, but more studies are needed to better understand this. Until we have a vaccine available and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices makes recommendations to CDC on how to best use COVID-19 vaccines, CDC cannot comment on whether people who had COVID-19 should get a COVID-19 vaccine. GW Infectious Disease experts feel that the immunity should last at least 4 months for most individuals who had a COVID-19 infection.

## ABOUT THE VACCINE

- **How does the Pfizer vaccine work?**

This is an mRNA vaccine. This vaccine does not use the live virus from COVID-19. mRNA vaccines contain a short segment of genetic code which your own cells' enzymes use to make a part of the COVID virus called the spike protein. Your body's immune system will then make antibodies against this protein that should then protect you against infection with the virus

- **Given that mRNA vaccines are a new technology, is there any theoretical concern for long-term effects?**

mRNA vaccines have been studied for five years so while the technology is still relatively new, it was not invented for this pandemic. While we cannot state affirmatively potential long-term effects, we can say that mRNA degrades within a few days and it does not integrate into your DNA. It is believed the risk is quite low for long-term effects. Meanwhile, the risk of long-term effects from becoming ill with COVID-19 can be substantial. Research and stringent surveillance will continue.

- **What are the expected side effects of this vaccine?**

The most common side effects from this vaccine have included fatigue, muscle pains, joint pains, headaches, pain and redness at the injection site. These symptoms were more common after the second dose of the vaccine and the majority of side effects were mild.

- **Are the side effects the same for Moderna and Pfizer?**

We expect Pfizer to be available first. However, results show that their side effects and safety profiles are the same.

- **Can you get COVID-19 from the vaccine?**

No, the mRNA only allows your body to create the surface protein of the virus called the spike protein that the virus uses to attach to the cells in your lungs. Since this is not the whole virus there is no possibility of getting COVID-19 from the vaccine.

- **How is it administered?**

It will be administered in the arm similar to a flu shot and then you will be monitored for 15 minutes. The entire process will take about 20 minutes.

- **How many doses do I need?**

For the Pfizer vaccine, you will need two doses, 21 days apart. For the Moderna vaccine, you will need two doses, 28 days apart.

- **Why do we have to get two doses?**

For the Pfizer vaccine, the second dose, essentially doubles vaccine efficacy. The data does not suggest that one dose is adequate at this point. We also expect that the longevity of protection would be much lower with a single dose.

## **VACCINATION PROCESS**

- **When will we get the vaccine?**

Following approval, we expect to receive the first batch of vaccines in December 2020. These will be used to administer the first round of shots. The second dose will arrive later.

- **How many vaccines are we expecting? How many do we keep here on Foggy Bottom site versus other sites for GW?**

We are slated to receive 925 vaccinations in the first round for GW. Since we have advanced cold-storage facilities, we will serve as one of DC's local hubs for distribution in a "hub and spoke" model.

Our spoke facility is the Psychiatric Institute of Washington (PIW). They will receive their allotment as determined by DC Health. Since we can safely store the vaccine, we are holding the vaccine for PIW. At this time, we have not been assigned additional spokes.

- **How are you identifying who gets the vaccine?**

The US Government has laid out vaccination prioritization groups for the United States. GW Hospital will follow these guidelines, in addition to those laid out by DC Health, and DC Hospital Association guidance. DC Health has identified staff in the ED, as well as Labor and Delivery as first priority as they see individuals when they first arrive to the hospital ill or in labor, whose COVID-19 status is not yet known at that point. DC Health has identified individuals as caring for COVID patients as the next priority group, followed by all healthcare workers using prioritization.

- **Will comorbid conditions and age to prioritize usage of vaccine within the first group?**

Looking at guidance from CDC, Federal and Local Government, we are looking at age over 65 as well as individuals who have comorbidities that put that at risk for severe COVID-19 vaccine. This is for our initial phases. Over time, we anticipate to have plenty of vaccine for everyone regardless of role and risk factors

- **When will I receive the vaccine?**

GW Clinical Enterprise is prioritizing the vaccine as outlined above, beyond that, we will make the vaccine available to all personnel who would like to be vaccinated using the identified GW COVID 19 Vaccine allocation process. We will continue to keep you updated on the vaccine(s) availability.

- **Is the COVID vaccine required?**

No, we are not requiring that personnel receive a COVID-19 vaccine but we highly encourage individuals to consider receiving the vaccine.

- **Will people who had the virus be excluded from vaccination?**  
No, they will not.
- **How will you identify who gets the vaccine?**  
All personnel in the GW Clinical Enterprise must complete registration in our [COVID-19 Vaccine Portal located here](#). **Please submit an entry by February 1, 2020. You can change your selection later.** Please note that by completing this form you are not committing to being vaccinated. In order for the GW Clinical Enterprise to know who is willing to be vaccinated, being selected in a fair, equitable, and transparent manner, your prompt response to the COVID-19 Vaccine Database form request is appreciated.
- **Who should fill out the portal?**  
Everyone in the GW Clinical Enterprise should complete this portal. It is expected to be distributed by the end of the week of December 7, 2020. Everyone should submit an entry by February 1, 2021. Your entry can be updated or changed later.
- **What is the timeframe for vaccinations moving forward?**  
We will be administering vaccinations on a rolling basis.
- **How often will you get more vaccine?**  
The DC Government has stated that we will be receiving vaccine on a rolling basis.
- **Will everyone who wants a vaccination be able to get one?**  
We will work through our allocation algorithm and as we get more vaccines on a rolling basis, everyone who is interested in receiving a vaccine will be able to get one. This will take several months.
- **What about contractors at GW Hospital?**  
We are looking at our whole GW community. Everyone is essential to healthcare and we are including these populations as well.
- **Is the MFA going to get a designated supply of vaccines initially or later for our patients?**  
So far, the MFA has submitted the numbers of all personnel, including SMHS medical and PA students. The thought is that in the future, we would have a clinic where our patients can get vaccinated. We are still determining details and waiting for guidance from DC Health.
- **Will there be a mass vaccination event?**  
Yes, we anticipate a mass vaccination clinic similar to influenza. Safety is number one and we want to ensure physical distancing. This will be by appointment only, no walk-ins. That way, we can ensure an orderly process and the personnel who have been identified through the portal, will be notified ahead of time to schedule their vaccine.

- For faculty who work at multiple hospitals, should they all be vaccinated within the GW mode?**

Definitely complete the online web survey for GW. Take the first vaccine offered to you and get your second dose at the same site. The best vaccine to get is the one you can get soonest.
- How will I be notified if I am selected to receive the vaccine?**

GW Hospital Employee Health will contact individuals who have been identified to receive the vaccine.
- If I am identified as an initial recipient, can I decline and 'donate' to someone else?**

No, you cannot 'donate' your vaccine to someone else. The US Government has laid out vaccination prioritization groups for the United States. GW Clinical Enterprise will follow these guidelines, in addition to those laid out by DC Health, and DC Hospital Association guidance.
- Where will I get the vaccine?**

We will administer the vaccine in the GW Hospital auditorium. Employee Health will work with you to schedule a time to get your vaccine.
- How will I schedule my second dose?**

Employee Health will work with each individual to schedule their second dose of the vaccine.
- Is there a cost for the vaccine?**

The vaccine will be offered free to all personnel of GW Hospital, GW School of Medicine and Health Sciences and the GW Medical Faculty Associates.
- How will you ensure safety of administration of this vaccine?**

We will be practicing social distancing when administering the vaccine. In addition, all staff providing the vaccine will be educated and trained in advance.
- Will my information be private?**

Information regarding whether you have received the vaccination will not be shared with other personnel outside of those directly involved in planning and administration of the vaccine and will be part of your personnel health record.

#### **VACCINATION AND OPERATIONS MOVING FORWARD**

- After I get vaccinated, do I still need to wear a mask?**

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 personal

protective equipment such as face masks and faceshields/goggles, as well as physical distancing.

- **Will getting the vaccine impact whether I provide care for COVID-19 patients?**  
No, regardless of whether or not you receive the vaccine, you may still be assigned to care for COVID-19 patients.
- **If I elect to not be vaccinated at this time, can I still be vaccinated at a later date?**  
Yes.