

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for the COVID-19 Vaccine

### VACCINE DISTRIBUTION

#### How will the COVID-19 Vaccine be distributed in Merced County?

The Merced County Department of Public Health (Department) is following the State's phased vaccine allocation guidelines, which provides specific a distribution plan for those eligible to receive the vaccine. Initial vaccine supply will be very limited and only those in the current phases will be eligible to receive the vaccine. The four phases are as follows:

#### Phase 1A:

- Keep in mind that vaccines are very limited and will be administer on a first come first basis to individuals who have pre-registered. To be eligible for the vaccine you must fall under the following categories for Phase 1A (read to community member).

#### Phase 1a, Tier 1

- HCP at acute care, psychiatric and correctional facility hospitals
- HCP at skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, and similar settings for older or medically vulnerable individuals
- Residents at Long Term Care Facilities (LTCF)
- Paramedics, EMTs and others providing emergency medical services
- Law Enforcement Officers assisting with emergency medical services (i.e. mass vaccination sites)
- HCP at dialysis centers
- HCP as infusion centers\*

#### Phase 1a, Tier 2

- HCP at intermediate care facilities for persons who need non-continuous nursing supervision and supportive care
- HCP at residential Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and Mental Health facilities\*
- HCP at Office of Diversion and Re-entry (ODR ) and Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS )\*
- Home health care and in-home supportive services personnel
- Community health workers, including promotoras
- Public health field staff that are part of COVID-19 field response and/or vaccinators
- HCP at primary Care clinics, including Federally Qualified Health Centers, Rural Health Centers, correctional facility clinics, and urgent care clinics

#### Phase 1a, Tier 3

- HCP that work in other health care settings, including:
- Specialty clinics
- Laboratory workers
- Dental and other oral health clinics
- Pharmacy staff not working in settings at higher tiers
- Veterinarians

**Phase 1B:**

\*Merced County will be focusing on individuals 65 years and older the week of January 18, 2021 along with individuals in Phase 1a, as announced by the Governor.

Phase 1B, Tier 1

- 65 years and older
- Front line essential workers (education, childcare, emergency services, and food/agricultural)

Phase 1B, Tier 2

- Front line essential workers (transportation and logistics, industrial, commercial, residential, sheltering facilities and services, and critical manufacturing)
- Congregate settings with outbreak risk (i.e. incarcerated, homeless, etc.)

**Phase 1C:**

- Persons 50-64 years old
- Persons 16-49 years old with high risk health conditions
- Other essential works (water and wastewater, chemical and hazardous materials, finances services, IT and communication, government operations/CBO essential functions, defense and energy)

**Phase 2:**

- All older adults not included in Phase 1
- All other critical infrastructure workers not covered in Phase 1
- People with high-risk conditions

**Phase 3:**

- All workers in high-risk exposure settings not covered in previous phases
- Children (if it is safe for them)

**Phase 4:**

- Everyone residing in Merced County who did not receive the vaccine in previous phases

**When can I get my vaccine?**

Vaccine supply is limited and distribution is taking place in 4 phases. The state's current timeline projects that vaccine will become available to the general population in the 4<sup>th</sup> phase projected to happen in or around spring/summer 2021. You can also register for

vaccine clinic notifications in Merced County (as vaccine becomes more widely available), visit [www.vaccinatemercedcounty.com](http://www.vaccinatemercedcounty.com). You may also check with your healthcare provider to find out if they are providing vaccines to their patients.

## **VACCINE DISTRIBUTION IN MERCED COUNTY**

### **How many vaccines have Merced County received from the state and how many have been given?**

Information regarding the vaccine distribution in Merced County can be view on the Merced County Dashboard at [www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus](http://www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus).

Note – If you are unable to view this information on the website, you may have to clear your Cache in your browsing window “Settings”.

### **What phase is Merced County currently in?**

Information regarding the current vaccine distribution phase in Merced County can be view on the Merced County Dashboard at [www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus](http://www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus).

Note – If you are unable to view this information on the website, you may have to clear your Cache in your Browsing Settings.

### **How will people be notified when it is their turn to get vaccinated?**

You can register for vaccine clinic notifications in Merced County (as vaccine becomes more widely available), visit [www.vaccinatemercedcounty.com](http://www.vaccinatemercedcounty.com).

### **When will the vaccine be available for the general public?**

The State anticipates having vaccine available to the general public in late Spring or early Summer of 2021. As vaccine availability increases, vaccination recommendations will expand to include more groups. The goal is for everyone to be able to easily get a COVID-19 vaccination as soon as large quantities of vaccine are available.

### **Why are other counties moving faster through their phases than Merced County?**

There is a shortage of providers in Merced County along with the shortage of vaccine supplies nation-wide. Both of these are contributing factors to how quickly the vaccine can be administered to individuals in the community.

## **GENERAL VACCINE INFORMATION**

### **What is the difference between the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine?**

Name	Pfizer	Moderna
Type	Both are mRNA vaccines --- these vaccines teach our cells how to make a protein that trigger an immune response inside our bodies, which protect us from getting infected if the real virus enters our bodies	

<b>Doses</b>	Both COVID-19 vaccines require 2 doses	
<b>Administration</b>	3 weeks (21 days) apart	4 weeks (28 days) apart
<b>Authorized age groups</b>	Ages 16 years and older	Ages 18 years and older
<b>Most common side effects</b>	Injection site pain Fatigue Headache Muscle pain Chills Joint pain Fever	Injection site pain Fatigue Headache Muscle pain Joint pain Chills

**Is it better to get natural immunity to COVID-19 rather than immunity from a vaccine?**

No. While you may have some short-term antibody protection after recovering from COVID-19, experts are still unsure how long this protection lasts. Vaccination is the best protection from becoming ill from the virus.

**Will a COVID-19 vaccine protect me against the new strain of coronavirus?**

Yes, experts believe the current COVID-19 vaccine should still protect individuals. Currently, there is no evidence that these variants cause more severe illness or increased risk of death.

Experts are continuing to work on learning more about these variants to better understand how easily they might be transmitted and the efficacy of current vaccines.

**If I received the Pfizer vaccine as the first dose, can I receive a Moderna vaccine for the second dose?**

No, per the CDC guidance on COVID-19 vaccines both doses of the series should be completed with the same product. For example, if you receive your first dose from Pfizer your second dose should also be Pfizer.

**Is this going to be an annual vaccine like the flu, or a “one-time” or “every 12 years” kind of schedule, or do we not know?**

At this time, the frequency of receiving this vaccine is unknown, along with how long immunity lasts from vaccination. Studies and data collection are ongoing about the durability of the responses by experts in the medical field.

**How much will the vaccine cost?**

There is no cost associated with receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. However, vaccination providers will be able to charge an administration fee for giving the shot to someone. Vaccine 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.

**Are undocumented individuals going to be eligible to receive the vaccine?**

Yes. On March 14, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) updated their website to make clear that seeking "testing, treatment, nor preventative care (including vaccines, if a vaccine becomes available) related to COVID-19" will not be considered as part of the public charge analysis. For more information, visit <https://www.uscis.gov/greencard/public-charge>.

**What percentage of the population needs to get vaccinated to have herd immunity to COVID-19?**

Experts do not know what percentage of people would need to get vaccinated to achieve herd immunity to COVID-19. Herd immunity is a term used to describe when enough people have protection, from either previous infection or vaccination, that it is unlikely a virus or bacteria can spread and cause disease. As a result, everyone within the community is protected even if some people do not have any protection themselves. The percentage of people who need to have protection in order to achieve herd immunity varies by disease.

**Will my workplace allow me to receive time off to recover and take the vaccine?**

Please contact your workplace human resource center, as every workplace has their own policy.

**VACCINE SAFETY**

**Are there any side effects after receiving the vaccine? How does it have an impact to the body?**

Yes. Common side effects may include

- pain or aches,
- swelling,
- redness, and/or
- a sore arm where you got the shot.

Throughout the rest of your body, you may experience:

- chills,
- tiredness
- headaches, and/or
- a fever

Please remember that side effects may feel like the flu and may affect your ability to do daily activities, but they should go away in a few days. If you have a severe reaction, you should contact emergency services immediately.

After vaccination, you will be provided with information on how to report any symptoms or side effects after getting the COVID-19 vaccine with the V-Safe checker. Visit the CDC's website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/vsafe.html> for more information.

### **Do I still need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others after receiving two doses of the vaccine?**

Yes. Receiving a vaccine is just one tool to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. According to the CDC, not enough information is available to experts to understand the protection that the COVID-19 provides to people in real-world conditions. They are also working to determine if the vaccine will prevent the spreading of the virus, even if a person is not sick.

It is very important to protect yourself and others to follow these recommendations:

- Wear a mask over your nose and mouth when around others.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from others.
- Avoid crowds.
- Avoid poorly ventilated spaces.
- Wash your hands often.

### **Are COVID-19 vaccines safe?**

All COVID-19 vaccines were tested in clinical trials involving tens of thousands of people to make sure they meet safety standards and protect adults of different ages, races, and ethnicities. The unknown potential benefits of a COVID-19 vaccine have outweighed the known and potential risks of the vaccine, as determined by the CDC and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

For information about vaccine safety, visit the CDC's website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety.html>.

### **I've had allergic reactions to vaccines in the past. Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), if you have had an immediate allergic reaction, even if it was not severe, to a vaccine or injectable therapy for another disease, you should ask your doctor if you should get a COVID-19 vaccine. Your doctor will help you decide if it is safe to receive the vaccine. For more information, visit the CDC's website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/allergic-reaction.html>.

### **Is it safe to get a COVID-19 vaccine if I have an underlying medical condition?**

According to the CDC, individuals with underlying medical conditions can receive the COVID-19 vaccination, as long as they have not had any immediate or severe allergic reactions to a vaccine or the ingredients in the vaccine. It is an important consideration for these individuals because of the increased risk for severe illness associated with contracting COVID-19. For more information, visit the CDC's website at

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/underlying-conditions.html>.

## **WHO SHOULD RECEIVE THE COVID-19 VACCINE**

### **Should I get vaccinated for COVID-19?**

The vaccine will help protect you from getting COVID-19. If you still get infected after you get vaccinated, the vaccine may prevent serious illness. By being vaccinated, you can also help protect people around you. Both natural and vaccine-induced immunities are important in protecting individuals from contracting and spreading COVID-19.

### **What if I already had COVID-19 and have recovered; do I still need to get vaccinated?**

Yes. Due to the high risks of severe illness related to COVID-19 and the possibility of reinfection, you should be vaccinated regardless of any previous illness. Experts still do not know how long someone is protected by “natural immunity” or the immunity someone gains from having an infection.

### **Is it safe for pregnant or breastfeeding women to receive a COVID-19 vaccine?**

While there have been no specific studies in these groups, there is no contraindication to receipt of the vaccine for pregnant or breastfeeding women. Pregnant or breastfeeding women should discuss their options with their healthcare providers.

### **If I get a COVID-19 vaccine, will I be protected from getting sick with COVID-19?**

Yes. According to the CDC, the COVID-19 vaccination works by teaching your immune system to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19. This helps protect you from getting sick with the illness. To learn more on how the vaccine works, visit the CDC’s website at [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/how-they-work.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fvaccines%2Fabout-vaccines%2Fhow-they-work.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/how-they-work.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fvaccines%2Fabout-vaccines%2Fhow-they-work.html).

### **Should I vaccinate my child against COVID-19?**

No. At this time, more studies are needed for children 16 and younger.

## **MODERNA VACCINE DISTRIBUTION PAUSE**

### **I heard in the news that the Moderna vaccine has been recalled. Is this report true?**

No, the COVID-19 Moderna vaccine has not been recalled. The State has recommended the pause of use for a specific Moderna vaccine with the lot number 041L20A (meaning specific batch of vaccine), because fewer than 10 individuals experienced a possible severe allergic reaction during the standard observation period.

(which is 15 to 30 minutes immediately after the vaccine is administered). It is just a precaution.

The California Department of Public Health issued a statement, which may be viewed here: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/OPA/Pages/NR21-021.aspx>.

**Was the Moderna vaccine, Lot 041L20A, distributed in Merced County?**

Yes. Merced County received this specific Moderna vaccine. The vaccine was distributed to local healthcare providers and used in the vaccination clinic held on Friday, January 15, 2021, by the Department in Merced and Los Banos. There were no reported issues with the patients that received the vaccine at the Department. The Department will not be using this specific Moderna vaccine until further instructions are provided by the State.

**Did anyone who received the Moderna vaccine in Merced County experience adverse reactions?**

No, there have been no reported allergic reactions to the Moderna vaccine, Lot 041L20A, within the monitoring window of 15 – 30 minutes, administered during the vaccine clinics on January 15, 2021, in Merced and Los Banos.

**I received the Moderna vaccine from Lot 041L20A. What should I do?**

You should not be concerned, if you received the vaccine from Moderna with the Lot 041L20A from the Department and did not have any adverse effects immediately after the vaccine was administered. If you are experiencing any severe medical or psychological distress, please call 911 or your medical provider immediately.

For more information about allergic reactions to the COVID-19 vaccine, visit the CDC's website at <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/clinical-considerations/managing-anaphylaxis.html>.

**I have an appointment with the Merced County Department of Public Health to receive the vaccine. Will the Moderna vaccine be used?**

Yes, but not from the specific lot that has been recommended to be paused. The State will continue to distribute and administer the Moderna vaccine, excluding Lot 041L20A.

**Will more information be provided about the use of the paused Moderna vaccine?**

Yes. The CDC and the FDA are promptly reviewing the lot and related medical information. No additional clusters of reactions have been reported in individuals receiving this specific vaccine lot. The investigation is ongoing, and officials expect to learn more information next week.