

Lorien Health Services COVID-19 Vaccine FAQs

12.14.20

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?

The U.S. vaccine safety system ensures that all vaccines are as safe as possible. Safety is a top priority while federal partners work to make a coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccine(s) available.

The clinical trials are evaluating investigational COVID-19 vaccines in many thousands of study participants to generate scientific data and other information for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to determine their safety and effectiveness. These clinical trials are being conducted according to the rigorous standards set forth by FDA in June. If FDA determines that a vaccine meets its safety and effectiveness standards, it can make these vaccines available for use in the United States by approval or emergency use authorization.

Currently, there are two vaccines. Moderna's is preparing for FDA approval and Pfizer's was approved by the FDA on December 10th.

Based on known reports from the clinical trials, neither the Moderna nor the Pfizer vaccine trials have reported any serious safety concerns. Both trials had fully independent safety monitoring boards, and full safety data are being reviewed by the FDA and expert panels.

Will the COVID-19 vaccine be effective?

Yes. Clinical trials provide data and information about how well a vaccine prevents an infectious disease and about how safe it is. The FDA evaluates these data, as well as manufacturing information, to assess the safety and effectiveness of vaccines. FDA then decides whether to approve a vaccine or authorize it for emergency use in the United States.

More assessments take place after a vaccine is either approved or authorized for emergency use by FDA and then recommended for public use. The goal of these assessments is to understand more about the protection a vaccine provides under real-world conditions, outside of clinical trials.

FDA scientists found the vaccine was 95% effective at preventing illness after two shots spaced three weeks apart.

When will the COVID-19 vaccine be available in Maryland? Who will receive the vaccine first?

The FDA met on December 10 and passed the Pfizer vaccine and will meet on December 17 to consider the Moderna vaccine. The goal is to deliver safe vaccines that work, with the first supply available to Maryland on December 14.

The first phase of vaccination distribution in Maryland includes hospital workers and nursing home residents and employees.

How will the vaccine be administered?

Both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines require two doses. Pfizer's booster shot will be given three weeks after the first one; Moderna's is spaced four weeks later.

Lorien has contracted with CVS, one of the state health department's designated distributing pharmacies, to coordinate the administration of vaccines.

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Does the COVID-19 vaccine contain a live virus?

None of the COVID-19 vaccines currently in development in the United States use the live virus that causes COVID-19. The goal for each of them is to teach our immune systems how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19. Sometimes this process can cause symptoms, such as fever. These symptoms are normal and are a sign that the body is building immunity.

It typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination. That means it's possible a person could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and get sick. This is because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection.

Are there side effects?

Dr. Jinlene Chan, Maryland's top public health official, said most people did not have side effects in vaccine trials, but some had mild fever, headaches or pain at the injection site.

Once vaccinated, is there a need for masks and social distancing?

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 stop this pandemic, like covering your mouth and nose with a mask, washing hands often, and staying at least 6 feet away from others. Together, COVID-19 vaccination and following CDC's recommendations for how to protect yourself and others 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 steps everyone should take to slow the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. Other factors, including how many people get vaccinated and how the virus is spreading in communities, will also affect this decision.

If I have already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated?

HCP with documented acute COVID-19 infection in the preceding 90 days may choose to delay vaccination until near the end of the 90-day period in order to facilitate vaccination of those HCP who remain susceptible to infection, as current evidence suggests reinfection is uncommon during this period after initial infection. Of note, previous COVID-19 infection, whether symptomatic or asymptomatic, is not considered a contraindication to vaccination and serologic testing for COVID-19 antibodies is not recommended prior to vaccination.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine mandatory for Lorien residents and employees?

Lorien recommends its residents and staff receive the vaccination when it is available. The vaccine will be voluntary. Under the FDA's Emergency Use Authorization, informed consent is required to administer the vaccine.