



Search has compiled this list of FAQs based on input gathered from the COVID-19 vaccine surveys circulated in December 2020. Thank you for your participation!

Q. Is a COVID-19 vaccine safe?

A. The U.S. vaccine safety system is a deliberate and multi-phase process to ensure all vaccines are as safe as possible. Safety is a top priority. Vaccine candidates conduct clinical trials with many thousands of study participants to generate scientific data and other information for the FDA to determine their safety and effectiveness. After evaluating this vaccine for safety and effectiveness, the FDA provided an Emergency Use Authorization, making the vaccine available for use in the U.S. As the vaccine is distributed and administered throughout the country, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is working with the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) to review data on efficacy, safety, and possible side effects to ensure continued safety monitoring is in place.

Q. Does my loved one have to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

A. There is no federal or state mandate to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. The CDC recommends the vaccine to all Americans ages 16 and over. Search is not mandating the COVID-19 vaccine for anyone working or living at Search but is following the guidance of The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Illinois Department of Public Health and strongly encouraging everyone connected to Search to get vaccinated. There are no legal repercussions (such as fines, sanctions or punishments) for refusing the vaccine. However, if you do not consent for the vaccine, your ward/loved one will not be protected against the virus that causes COVID-19 and will be more likely to be infected with the virus. Within Search, whether someone has received the vaccine may be a safety factor considered when determining future program delivery, such as a return to day program or community recreational activities.

Q. Does my ward/loved one need a vaccine if s/he have already had COVID-19?

A. Yes, individuals who have already had COVID-19 should plan to take the COVID-19 vaccine, because the science is currently inconclusive as to whether one would be naturally protected from a second COVID-19 infection in the future. The CDC currently suggests that if your ward/loved one was infected with COVID-19 during the previous 90 days, it is likely that your ward/loved one would still have immune protection and that your ward/loved one will be asked to wait to receive the vaccine to allow others to be vaccinated first.

Q. Can the COVID-19 vaccine cause my ward/loved one to become infected or infect others?

A. No, your ward/loved one cannot become infected or infect others from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, because the vaccine contains no live virus. Instead, the vaccine directs your body to produce a protein that teaches one's body how to fight off the virus.

Q. How does the COVID-19 vaccine work?

A. The immune system makes antibodies to fight infections. The COVID-19 vaccine causes the body to make antibodies that target the COVID-19 virus. In the event that your ward/loved one's body is exposed to the actual COVID-19 virus, the new antibodies prevent infection.



Q. How long will it take for COVID-19 vaccines to take effect? Can my loved one be protected from COVID-19 after the first dose of the vaccine?

A. The COVID-19 vaccine is expected to provide some protection a couple of weeks after the initial vaccine and reaches its greatest effectiveness approximately 4 weeks after the second dose. Although the first dose of vaccine offers some immunity, your loved one will still be considered susceptible to COVID-19. It is very important to take the second vaccine within the recommended time period for maximum effectiveness.

Q. What have the trials revealed?

A. Through their respective clinical trials, Pfizer and Moderna have indicated their vaccines are approximately 95% effective.

Q. My loved one has allergies. Is this vaccine safe for them?

A. While serious allergic reactions were not seen in vaccine clinical trials of thousands of patients, rare allergic reactions to vaccines are possible. If your ward/loved one have a history of serious allergic reactions, we will discuss the situation with your ward/loved one's healthcare provider. The COVID-19 vaccine does not contain any animal products such as eggs.

Q. What are the side effects of this vaccine?

A. Some people may experience side effects, which are a part of the normal immune response to a vaccine. The majority of the side effects, while not seen in every individual, are signs that the body is recognizing the vaccine and mounting an immune response. Based on prior studies, side effects may include pain, redness and swelling at the site of the injection., fatigue, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, fever, nausea, malaise, and swollen lymph nodes. These symptoms may occur within 2 days after the shot and last 1 to 2 days. Side effects may be more frequent after the 2nd shot (booster) and less frequent among older adults. Long-term side effects are unknown, although most vaccines do not have long-term side effects. Vaccine studies are ongoing and will continue to monitor for adverse events.

Q. How long will the vaccine protect my loved one from COVID-19? Will this be an annual vaccination, like the flu?

A. We are still learning about length of immunity. To determine how long protection lasts, follow-up studies are required to detect levels of both types of immune responses – antibody and T cell – as well as any repeated exposure risks. As more information becomes available, more information will be shared on the length of immunity.

Q. If your loved one gets the vaccine, can your loved one and staff quit wearing a mask?

A. No. While the COVID-19 vaccine is highly effective, it not 100% effective. Until the COVID-19 pandemic is controlled, people who receive the vaccine need to continue following Illinois Department of Public Health guidance such as the use of facemasks, social distancing, and regular hand washing. This protects your ward/loved one as well as your family and community.



Q: When will masking and social distancing be able to end, allowing us to get back to normal life?

A: Given the time it takes to get large quantities of the vaccine produced and distributed, we will need to continue our current mitigation practices for some time. It will remain important that vaccinated people continue to wear masks, practice social distancing and good hand hygiene to help prevent spread. Community infection rates will be continuously monitored and will be used to guide the decision process.

Q: Will the Search home visit and visitation policies change once your loved one receives the two vaccinations?

A: No. At least not right away. Until the COVID-19 pandemic is controlled and vaccines are widely distributed, we will need to continue our current risk mitigation practices, including mask wearing, socially distancing, regular hand washing and limiting contacts to those and for those who may not be vaccinated. This protects your loved one as well as your family and community. As Search has shifted internal policies throughout the pandemic, we will continue to monitor community infection rates and will use this as a guide in the decision process regarding home visits and visitations at our sites, as well as community activities and day program participation.

For more information on COVID-19 and the vaccine, please visit the Illinois Department of Health dhp.illinois.gov or Center for Disease Control cdc.gov.