

Coronavirus Vaccine in Florida: Your Questions Answered

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Federal approval of an emergency use authorization for Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine is imminent, and shipments could go out to states, including Florida, for local distribution [just days later](#).

States are expected to dictate who will get the relative small number of initial vaccines that are available, and then determine eligibility and distribution among its 21,478,000 residents.

Here are answers to some important questions that Floridians may have about coronavirus vaccines and their availability.

Will the first shipments of the Pfizer vaccine to Florida be available to everyone?

No. Under the state Department of Health's vaccine distribution plan, there are three phases of distribution in Florida. In the first phase, the first doses shipped to the state will be distributed to hospital workers, employees and residents of long-term care facilities, and first responders. The second phase will continue to immunize first responders, as well as critical infrastructure and essential workers, while also beginning to distribute the vaccine to segments of the general public as more doses become available. In the third phase, the supply of vaccine should be sufficient for everyone.

Where in Florida will the initial doses go?

The Florida Department of Health says Pinellas and Broward counties will get the vaccine first.

After hospital workers and long-term care residents get their doses from the first shipment, what will happen if there is any left over?

Florida health officials say they will then prioritize getting what's left of the initial vaccine doses to the elderly and to those with comorbidities, or health conditions that

make them especially vulnerable to the virus.

After the first phase, when can the broader public expect to be able to get the vaccine?

Dr. Anthony Fauci and other public health leaders estimate it will likely be months, possibly April, before most of the American public who don't meet certain conditions for getting prioritized first can expect to get access to the vaccine.

Where will I be able to get a vaccine when it becomes available in Florida?

The Health Department is coordinating with pharmacies, hospitals, long-term care facilities, and homeless shelters as potential primary locations for administration of vaccines. The Health Department is also working with emergency medical services, local and regional public safety agencies, homeless shelters, and correctional and detention facilities to determine the best courses for rapid and comprehensive distribution of a vaccine. And public mass-vaccination clinics are part of the plan — once a large enough supply of vaccine is available.

Who will be overseeing the administration of COVID-19 vaccines in Florida?

The Health Department has assembled a workgroup that includes state Surgeon General Scott Rivkees, Deputy Secretary for Health Dr. Shamari Robertson, as well as more than 40 experts in the fields of medicine, emergency coordination, immunizations, emergency medical response, children's medicine, elderly health care, the National Guard, and law.

Is Florida prepared with a plan to disseminate a COVID-19 vaccine?

According to the state's COVID-19 Vaccination Plan, the Florida Department of Health used the early phase of this year's administration of flu shots (up to December 1) in all 67 county health departments as a sort of "test run" for the COVID vaccine. The 2020 flu shot rollout took issues such as increased vaccinations, social distancing during administration, and expanded use of personal protection equipment into account, with an eye toward an eventual COVID vaccine release.

Can kids get the vaccine initially?

No. The Food and Drug Administration's emergency use authorization of the Pfizer vaccine only allows vaccinations for people ages 16 and older.

What's the difference between the various vaccines in testing and production, and which one is best for me?

There are dozens of coronavirus vaccines being tested. But of the two that the federal government is funding — Pfizer and Moderna — both are very similar. Florida State University infectious disease expert Dr. Michael Muszynski says because both were made using similar manufacturing methods, and both [show a high level of effectiveness](#) — about 95% — he says people really have no reason to prefer one or the other and should get the one that's available to them first.

Will I need to be vaccinated if I have already had COVID-19?

At this time, the medical community thinks that [reinfection may still be possible for those who have already contracted the coronavirus](#). There have been anecdotal reports of people getting infected twice. For this reason, it's a good idea to get vaccinated even if you have already been sick with COVID-19.

If I take the vaccine, will I test positive for COVID-19?

None of the vaccines currently undergoing trials in the U.S. will return a positive viral test result for the coronavirus once administered. Since the purpose of the vaccine is to produce an immune response in the body, those who get vaccinated could get a positive result [on a test for COVID-19 antibodies](#).

Will getting a flu shot help reduce my chances of catching COVID-19?

There is no evidence that getting a flu shot will reduce your chances of catching the coronavirus. However, [recent studies indicate](#) that people who have had a flu shot and later come down with COVID-19 may be less likely to experience severe complications or hospitalization from it.