

COVID-19 vaccine

Initial rollout to BJC and WashU employees

FAQs - December 7, 2020

This document will be updated as needed and is posted on the [BJCnet COVID-19 intranet site](#). The content in this document is intended for BJC/WashU employees only, not for the general public.

Initial rollout timeframe and availability

1. When will the COVID-19 vaccine be available for BJC and WashU employees?

We expect the first shipment of vaccine to arrive in mid-December and expect to begin administering vaccinations as early as December 17 or 18. This will, of course, depend on timely authorization by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices.

2. Will the vaccine be available to all employees initially?

No. There will be a limited supply of the vaccine initially. Therefore, we will be prioritizing employees who will be eligible to receive the vaccine. In the interest of protecting those at greater risk for exposure to COVID-19 and to protect our patients, we will be starting with employees who work directly with patients or in patient care areas, such as, but not limited to, physicians, nurses, patient care technicians, therapists, patient transport, patient access representatives, environmental and food services, security, etc. All eligible patient-facing individuals will be prioritized together – regardless of their work location or status (part-time, full-time, trainee, contractor etc.) We will start with older employees first, as older adults are at higher risk for complications from COVID-19. The first round of BJC/WashU vaccines will be scheduled by age. Employees in each age group will receive an e-mail when that age group's scheduling window is open.

3. Do BJC and WashU recommend that I get the vaccine if I have the opportunity?

BJC and WashU strongly encourage vaccination for anyone who is eligible to receive it. While voluntary at this time, this is a valuable early opportunity to be protected against contracting COVID-19. Employees are encouraged to review reliable and evidence-based [CDC information](#) about the vaccines to be able to make an informed personal decision about receiving the vaccine at this time. Talk to your provider if you have questions regarding your personal health situation.

4. Will vaccines be mandatory for employees or contractors/contingent workers?

No. At this time, employees and contractors/contingent workers may choose whether to be vaccinated, on a voluntary basis.

5. How will I know if I'm eligible to receive the vaccine? Will I be contacted?

BJC and WashU employees and providers who are eligible for this initial supply of COVID-19 vaccine will be contacted by email and offered the opportunity to sign up for a date/time to receive the vaccine. Occupational Health will administer the vaccine at specified locations. It is essential that you wait to be contacted before attempting to schedule an appointment, and that you do not share with others the link you receive for scheduling your appointment. If you try to "jump the line" to be vaccinated early or help someone else to be vaccinated early, you may delay a dose for a coworker who is at risk.

6. How many doses of the vaccine will BJC receive initially?

At this time, we anticipate receiving an initial delivery of 9,750 doses, with an opportunity to replenish that inventory weekly. This could change. As more vaccine doses become available, we will prioritize within our employee population who will be eligible for vaccination. Assuming we continue to receive a limited vaccine supply in the coming weeks and months, we will prioritize based on patient care and employee safety.

7. Will the process for vaccinating providers (WashU and private physicians, nurse practitioners, etc.) be the same as BJC employees?

Yes. BJC is working closely with WashU and with our medical staff offices to make vaccine available to providers. Patient-facing employees from both BJC and WashU will be prioritized together, by age.

8. How much does the vaccine cost?

There will be no charge for BJC employees, WashU employees, and other health care workers who choose to receive the vaccine through BJC.

9. I'm not in a patient care job. When can I expect to be eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine?

It will depend on vaccine availability. We are hopeful that within a few months, BJC will have enough supply of the vaccine to make it available to all employees.

10. When will the vaccine be available for my family and the general public?

Decisions about who to prioritize for access to a COVID-19 vaccine are made by federal and state public health agencies. BJC is required to follow these prioritization decisions. Eventually, we expect the vaccine to be available to anybody who wants it.

Nationwide, the first round of vaccines will go to health care personnel who cannot work remotely and the staff and patients of long-term care facilities. After this priority group has had an opportunity to receive the vaccine, the next group is essential workers, which include teachers, food service workers in the community and first responders. After that, it will be offered to individuals with conditions that make them high-risk for complications from COVID-19, including those ages 65 and older. Then it will be offered to the general public. It will be several months after the vaccines are released before they are available to the general public. Vaccines for the general public will likely be coordinated by the Health Department.

11. Where can I get more information on the vaccines?

Online resources are available and this list will continue to be updated. Visit:

Missouri – <https://covidvaccine.mo.gov/>

CDC – <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>

Vaccine safety**12. How do I know the vaccine is safe?**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) monitor all U.S. vaccines for safety and provide data and insight continuously to government health agencies, public health partners, and the public. The current vaccine safety system has the capacity to effectively monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines both under an FDA Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) and after FDA approval. The CDC, along with the FDA and other federal partners, will use established safety systems to conduct heightened safety monitoring of COVID-19 vaccines. Additional safety measures include using CDC text messaging and web surveys to follow up after individuals receive the vaccine. If a link is found between a side effect and a COVID-19 vaccine, public health officials will take appropriate action by weighing the benefits of the vaccine against its risks to determine if recommendations for using the vaccine should change and will continuously monitor and evaluate safety thereafter.

13. Can/should I get the vaccine if I'm pregnant or may become pregnant?

At this point, there are no data about the safety and effectiveness of these vaccines for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding. We expect to receive more information after the FDA authorization. Regardless, someone who is pregnant or might become pregnant or is breastfeeding should discuss with her medical provider whether to be vaccinated.

14. The development of the vaccines was accelerated and the long-term effects are unknown, right?

The rapid timeline to availability of these vaccines is not due to any shortcuts in development or safety testing of the vaccines. Scientists have been working on coronavirus vaccines for decades, after SARS-1 emerged and in response to MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome). Neither of these viruses turned out to spread as quickly as SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and so the vaccines being developed were never brought to market.

The funding provided by the federal government allowed vaccine developers to pursue all the usual vaccine development studies and safety testing at the same time instead of one phase at a time – and also allowed them to manufacture doses before the vaccine was approved. This support moved the process along more quickly, without any shortcuts in the development, effectiveness and safety testing process.

While there are only a few months of experience with these vaccines, there have not been any significant safety events noted with the Pfizer or the Moderna vaccines, the first two to apply for authorization. Over 70,000 people have received these vaccines. Most side effects of

vaccines appear in the weeks immediately following vaccine receipt. Delayed effects occurring months after vaccination are not usually seen.

BJC will be monitoring internally and reporting to the CDC any possible side effects from the vaccine.

15. What are the side effects?

At this time, the most common reported side effects have been fever, headache, fatigue, and body or muscle aches in the days immediately following vaccination. It is possible these side effects will be more prominent than what it is experienced after a flu shot. Per early reports, these effects are more common after the second dose.

16. If side effects cause me to miss work, how will that be handled for employees?

Occupational health is working on a plan for handling employees with these side effects after the vaccine so that they can rest and recover and get back to work promptly if they need time off. Treatment required for post-vaccination side effects will not be covered by workers' compensation and would require you to use regular PTO/ATO benefits if you are unable to work. More details will be available once the vaccine is available. Ideally, groups of health care workers from the same area will stagger their scheduled vaccine appointments so that a whole care team is not affected at once. Managers will provide more information when vaccine is available.

17. How long will the vaccine be effective?

This is not yet entirely clear. Studies have measured antibodies that persist for at least several months after vaccination. Antibodies are an important part of the immune system but not the only way disease is prevented. An important part of the FDA's decision about whether to authorize a COVID-19 vaccine will be whether it is safe and effective. How long a vaccine is likely to provide protection will likely require more study.

18. When the manufacturers mention 95% effectiveness, what does this mean? Does that mean a 95% chance of being COVID-19-immune or that you will experience 95% less symptoms if you contract COVID-19?

These results are impressive and show that, in the initial studies, the vaccines worked very well at protecting people against symptomatic COVID-19. These estimates have been reported by the manufacturer of the vaccine and will be reviewed by the FDA. Vaccine effectiveness is a mathematical calculation that compares the risk for developing disease (COVID-19) among a group of people who received the vaccine compared to the risk for developing the disease among a control group who did not receive the vaccine. It does not mean someone who was vaccinated has a 5 percent chance of still becoming infected with COVID-19.

19. I have a severe latex allergy. Can the COVID-19 vaccine be given safely to me?

BJC is waiting on final information from the manufacturer about the vaccine components and the composition of the stoppers of the vials and syringes. This information will be identified after a vaccine is approved by the FDA and before BJC begins administering this vaccine to anyone.

20. Once I'm vaccinated, can I still spread COVID-19 to others?

We know the vaccine protects against symptomatic COVID-19 and against severe disease with COVID-19. It is unknown whether it is possible for someone who has been vaccinated to still acquire and spread COVID-19 to others. This is one reason it will be essential to continue wearing a mask, avoiding crowds, physical distancing and washing your hands even after vaccination until this becomes clearer.

21. What does Emergency Use Authorization mean?

An Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) is a process the federal government can use during an emergency to authorize use of a vaccine, drug or medical device that is not yet licensed or that is licensed for a different purpose. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have been submitted for EUA.

22. Can I catch COVID-19 from the vaccine?

No. The vaccines do NOT use live virus and therefore cannot cause COVID-19.

23. Do I still need to wear a mask and practice physical distancing if I've been vaccinated?

Yes. It's important to continue practicing these safety measures until broad public immunity is achieved.

24. Is there an age recommendation for children to receive the vaccine?

We do not yet know whether children will be eligible to receive this vaccine. More information about safety and whether children and teenagers can be vaccinated will be available after the FDA authorizes the vaccine.

25. Is this vaccine safe for people who have an autoimmune disease and are on medication for treatment?

We do not yet know what personal health factors would make it unsafe for you to receive this vaccine. This information will be identified after a vaccine is approved by the FDA and before BJC begins administering this vaccine to anyone.

26. Do I need a vaccine if I've already had COVID-19?

Yes. It's unclear how long immunity lasts after COVID-19 infection and it may vary from individual to individual. It is likely that vaccination will ensure more consistent immunity across the population of recipients.

Vaccine administration/delivery

27. Is the vaccine a 2-part vaccine? If so, will I be scheduled to return for the second dose? Will it be every year, like the flu shot?

The first vaccines will require two doses separated by at least three or four weeks depending upon which vaccine you receive. BJC will help you schedule an appointment for your second dose when you are vaccinated the first time. At this time, we do not know whether follow-up vaccinations will be required for COVID-19, as they are for influenza.

28. At what point do BJC/WashU anticipate making a COVID-19 vaccination mandatory for employment?

BJC and WashU will not make a vaccine mandatory when it is administered under an Emergency Use Authorization. If the FDA licenses a COVID-19 vaccine in the future, we will follow its standard practices for determining whether receipt of a specific vaccine should be made a condition of employment.

29. Will a negative COVID-19 test be required before receiving the vaccine?

No. As with most vaccines, you should not receive it if you are currently ill with a fever. You will be screened for symptoms on the day of your scheduled vaccine appointment to protect those administering vaccines and ensure you can be vaccinated that day.

30. If I am allergic to the seasonal flu vaccine, should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

It is probably safe for you to receive the COVID-19 vaccine if you are allergic to another vaccine. Your provider or your occupational health office may be able to help assess this risk, which will depend on what exactly you are allergic to and whether that is a component of the COVID-19 vaccine.

31. If I have tested positive for COVID-19 but am no longer sick, can I get the vaccine?

Yes, you can still be vaccinated if you previously had COVID-19 and have recovered.

32. Will BJC eventually be administering COVID-19 vaccinations to the public like we do with flu shots?

At this time local public health departments are planning how to vaccinate the public. Similar to the seasonal influenza vaccine, it is expected that eventually the COVID-19 vaccine will be available through your local pharmacy, primary care physician or clinic. Dependent on patient volumes in our hospitals, BJC may be able to participate in a public COVID-19 vaccine program, but we need to ensure we have sufficient staff to take care of our patients before considering a public campaign effort.

Vaccine manufacturers

33. Who are the manufacturers in these initial rounds of vaccine supply?

Pfizer and Moderna are the two manufacturers who will provide the initial supply of COVID-19 vaccines. The Pfizer vaccine will be the first to supply BJC, in mid-December. These timeframes could change.

34. How do these new vaccines work?

The two vaccines nearing EUA approval – from Pfizer and Moderna – use a technology called messenger RNA, or mRNA. It's called "messenger" because it carries instructions to our cells to build immunity against the virus. It tells the cells to make a protein that the body can make antibodies against as part of its normal immune response. That immune response sticks around to protect the body against the SARS-CoV2 virus and prevents COVID-19. mRNA vaccines are being held to the same rigorous safety and effectiveness standards as all other types of vaccines in the United States. mRNA never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where our genetic material (DNA) is kept. The cell breaks down and gets rid of the mRNA soon

after it is finished using the instructions. This means the mRNA vaccines do NOT affect or interact with our DNA in any way.

35. Will there be a website/resource to report side effects from the vaccine, if there are any?

Recipients of the vaccine will have an opportunity to report side effects using a mobile app. BJC also will be tracking whether those we vaccinate experience any side effects. More instructions about how to report any side effects will be coming soon.

36. Will employees be informed which vaccine they are receiving, Pfizer or Moderna?

Yes. BJC is required to keep a record of every person we vaccinate and every dose we administer. BJC also will complete and provide to you a paper vaccination card from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

37. How will the vaccine be stored? Are there special refrigeration units? I've read the Pfizer vaccine must be stored in extremely cold temperatures.

The storage requirements for the COVID-19 vaccines can be significant. A BJC team that includes pharmacist representatives has been working since October to understand these requirements and plan for how to safely receive, store and administer while ensuring the vaccine remains at the correct temperature.