

# Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccine FAQs

Updated March 25, 2021

Magellan Rx Management is actively monitoring the COVID-19 vaccine development, therapeutics pipeline, and impact of the pandemic to the drug supply chain. Below you will find helpful information and answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about COVID-19 vaccines.

## Magellan Rx's Role in the Pandemic

Magellan Rx was well positioned when this pandemic started as most of our support and operations functions were already set up to accommodate a “virtual world.” We are proud that we have maintained disruption-free service to our plans and members during this time.

As drugs and vaccines are being approved and authorized for COVID-19, Magellan Rx is committed to providing information that is credible and easy to understand. We have launched a [COVID-19 resources hub](#) with helpful videos and reference material related to the pandemic, clinical trials, drugs, and steps everyone can take to stay safe and informed.

Our National Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee, which includes experts who are on the front lines, have been reviewing the latest information regarding these vaccines and the impact of this pandemic to other drugs. Once the COVID-19 vaccines are approved or authorized, the committee will review the data so we understand the strengths and weaknesses of each vaccine and will provide that information to our plans and members.

We also have our own MRx Coronavirus Taskforce comprised of experts, including clinicians, government affairs personnel, and pharmacy network team members that meets regularly to discuss the latest developments and plan support. They have been checking the supply of medications to aid us in making any swift changes to our formulary and/or our Magellan Rx pharmacies so that our members can get the drugs they need. We are also monitoring government guidance at the federal and state levels. We are taking steps to ensure the COVID-19 vaccines can be obtained through the pharmacy benefit for plans, where permitted under federal and state regulations. Please see the Vaccine Coverage section below for more information.

## Vaccine Development

### What is Operation Warp Speed?

**Operation Warp Speed (OWS)** was set up by the White House to coordinate efforts among federal government entities, states, and private sector partners. It aims to accelerate the testing, supply, development, and distribution of safe and effective vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics.

### Which government agencies are involved in helping with the COVID-19 vaccine?

There are many government agencies involved in helping with the COVID-19 pandemic. A few of the key agencies are listed below for your reference:

- [Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#) – The FDA reviews and approves or authorizes safe and effective vaccines.
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) – The CDC is responsible for controlling the introduction and spread of infectious diseases.
- [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\)](#) – ACIP is a committee within the CDC that provides advice and guidance on effective control of vaccine-preventable diseases in the United States (U.S.) civilian population.
- [National Academies of Science Engineering & Medicine \(NASEM\)](#) – The National Institutes of Health (NIH) and CDC have tasked NASEM to develop a plan for equitable allocation of vaccines. They make recommendations for vaccine administration priority among the population.
- [Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority \(BARDA\)](#) – BARDA is a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) office responsible for the procurement and development of medical countermeasures. BARDA also procures and maintains stockpiles of materials, such as drugs, personal protective equipment (PPE) and vaccines for the Strategic National Stockpile.
- [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) – WHO is a specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for international public health.

### What COVID-19 vaccines are being developed?

There are many vaccines being studied to target the COVID-19 virus across the world. The WHO has assembled an international [list with all the vaccine candidates](#) that includes, mode of action, manufacturer(s), and trial phase at the time of publication.

Vaccines can be authorized in other countries before in the U.S. Those that are being considered in the U.S. will undergo the FDA's rigorous review process for safety and efficacy. Among these vaccines, OWS plans to include two vaccine candidates from each of the four platform technologies that OWS believes would yield the most safe and effective vaccines, for a total of eight vaccines. The U.S. FDA has issued emergency use authorizations for select vaccines. The six vaccine candidates below are in clinical trials and a full list can be viewed in our MRx Pipeline [COVID-19 Vaccine Front Runners](#) edition:

- Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech (both mRNA vaccines)
- AstraZeneca/Oxford and Janssen (both viral-vector vaccines)
- Novavax and Sanofi/GSK (both protein-based vaccines)

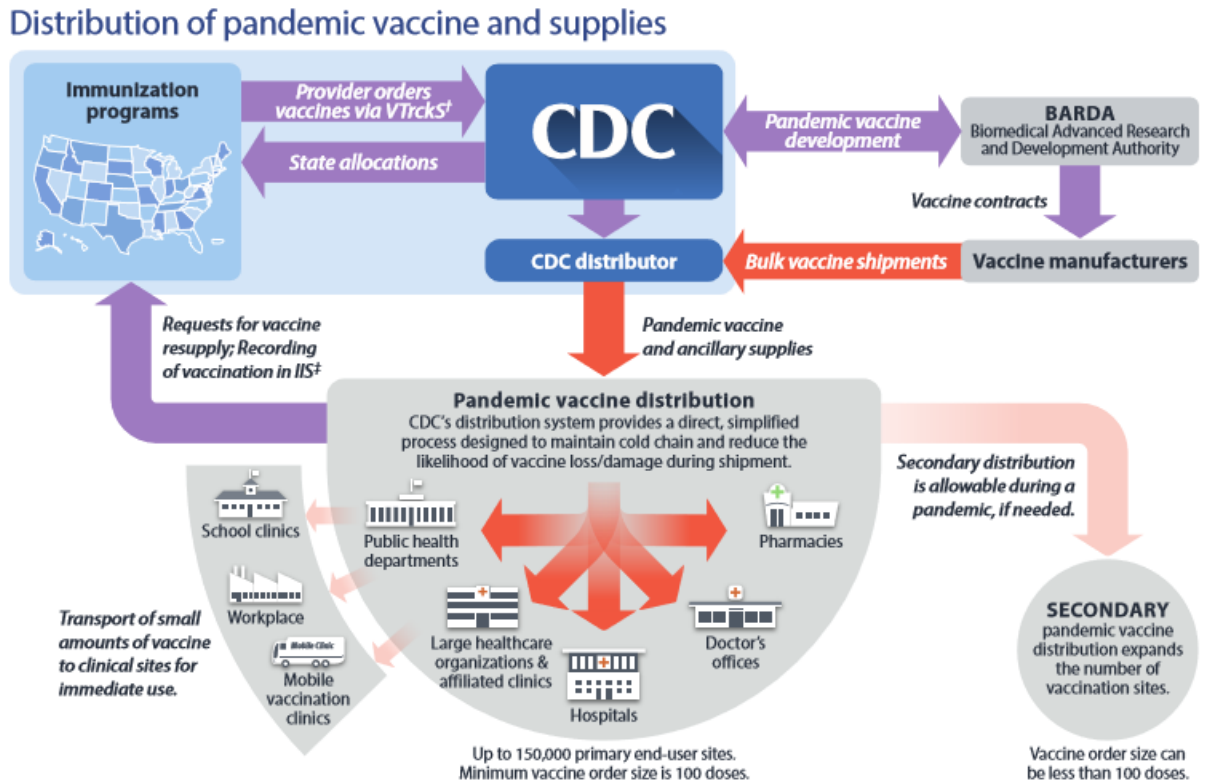
### Will the vaccine be authorized or approved?

It will depend on how the manufacturer submitted the FDA application. Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) permits availability of a vaccine during a public health emergency. The FDA has guidance in place to ensure an authorized vaccine is safe and effective. The FDA will review manufacturers' EUA vaccine applications and the manufacturers of the vaccines will ultimately seek FDA approval to remain available.

### Vaccine Distribution

#### How will the vaccine be distributed?

Through OWS, the federal government is coordinating COVID-19 vaccine distribution through McKesson, although some manufactures may use other distribution channels (e.g., Pfizer). COVID-19 vaccines may vary in temperature from refrigerated (2°C to 8°C) to frozen (-15°C to -25°C) to ultra-cold (-60°C to -80°C), which may affect distribution.



\* <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/admin/storage/index.html>

† The Vaccine Tracking System (VTrcks) is CDC's management and ordering systems for publicly-funded vaccines.

‡ Immunization Information System (IIS)

Interim pandemic distribution plan, 04/20/20

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/pandemic-resources/pandemic-influenza-vaccine-distribution-9p-508.pdf>

[www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/)

## Vaccine Information

### Who can administer the vaccine?

Any provider who is enrolled in the [federal COVID-19 Vaccination Program](#) can administer the vaccine. There will be [pharmacy](#) and non-pharmacy vaccine providers.

### Where can I get the vaccine?

Once the vaccine is available to the general public, you can visit [www.vaccinefinder.org](http://www.vaccinefinder.org) and check your [state website](#) to find a location near you. Magellan Rx is in contact with pharmacies that will be vaccinating to make sure our members will have access to the vaccine through their pharmacy benefit, if applicable.

Starting on February 11, those eligible for the vaccine will have the opportunity to be vaccinated at select pharmacies across the country through the [Federal Retail Pharmacy Program](#) for COVID-19 Vaccination. A list of participating pharmacies can be found on the [CDC's website](#).

### Do the vaccines work?

Yes, the vaccines that have FDA authorization have proven to be effective in preventing COVID-19 infection. Those who have been previously infected with COVID-19 are still encouraged to get the vaccine.

Viruses constantly change through mutation, and new variants of a virus are expected to occur over time. Studies suggest that antibodies generated through vaccination with currently authorized vaccines recognize these variants. This is being closely investigated and more studies are underway. Visit the [CDC](#) to learn more.

### Are the vaccines safe?

Safety is a top priority, and the U.S. vaccine authorization and approval process seeks to ensure that [all vaccines are safe](#) for the general population.

The studies for the OWS vaccines included large populations of people, most of which included over 30,000 participants. In addition, the government required that each manufacturer submit 2 months of safety data for the initial review. Safety monitoring will continue even after the vaccines have been FDA approved/authorized.

There are a lot of misconceptions about the COVID-19 vaccine in the public domain. Visit credible sources, such as the [CDC](#), to learn more. Also, discuss with your doctor if you have any medical conditions and/or any other concerns.

## When can I get the vaccine?

The CDC has advised that planning will involve considerations through 3 phases. The exact timing is unknown; however, many predict that most people will be able to get the COVID-19 vaccine sometime in 2021. States may have variations in the priority phases. Refer to your state and local health departments for more information.

PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3
<b>Populations of Focus*</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Healthcare workers, long term care residents, essential workers, and people at higher risk of severe COVID-19 illness, including people 65 years of age and older</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remainder of Phase 1 populations</li> <li>Critical Populations**</li> <li>General Populations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remainder of Phase 1 populations</li> <li>Critical populations**</li> <li>General populations</li> </ul>

\* Planning should consider that there may be initial age restrictions for vaccine products.

\*\* See section 4: Critical Populations for information on Phase 1 subset and other critical population groups.

[https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/downloads/COVID-19-Vaccination-Program-Interim\\_Playbook.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/downloads/COVID-19-Vaccination-Program-Interim_Playbook.pdf)

## Vaccine Coverage

### Will the vaccine be covered?

The federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act requires health insurance issuers and plans to cover any ACIP-recommended COVID-19 preventative service, including vaccines, **without cost-sharing within 15 business days of such recommendation to the CDC.** Once an authorized or approved COVID-19 vaccine is recommended by ACIP and adopted by the CDC Director, required coverage for vaccines as preventative services will also apply for Medicaid Early & Periodic Screening, Diagnostic & Treatment beneficiaries, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) provisions for most private insurance coverage, and for the Medicaid expansion populations.

The federal government has already purchased these vaccines and we are expecting the product cost to be \$0 for patients for most lines of business. Medicaid may have other state requirements. For Medicare, both the vaccine and administrative costs will be billed as \$0 under Medicare Part B. For commercial and other applicable lines of business, the administrative fees will be set to rates that are similar to CMS vaccine administration for Medicare.

Patient Costs				
	Commercial	Medicare	Medicaid	Uninsured
Vaccine Product Cost	\$0	\$0	\$0*	\$0
Vaccine Administration Cost	\$0	\$0	\$0*	\$0
Details	Covered under the ACA for ACIP recommended vaccines. Per guidance, insurers should cover administrative costs	Covered under Part B for vaccine and administration	*There may be differences in coverage based on state and population	Administration will be reimbursed through the Provider Relief Fund <sup>1</sup>

1. The Provider Relief Fund is administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

<https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/press-releases/trump-administration-acts-ensure-coverage-life-saving-covid-19-vaccines-therapeutics>

**What are the pharmacy reimbursement costs associated with the COVID-19 vaccine?**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) increased the Medicare payment amount for administering the COVID-19 vaccine. This new and higher payment rate reflects updated information about the costs involved in administering the COVID-19 vaccine for different types of providers, suppliers, and the additional resources necessary to ensure the vaccine is administered safely and appropriately. As a reminder, the cost of COVID-19 vaccines themselves are still covered by the federal government.

Effective for COVID-19 vaccines administered on or after March 15, 2021, the national average payment rate for physicians, hospitals, pharmacies and many other immunizers will be \$40 to administer each dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, regardless of whether it is a one or two dose vaccine. Magellan Rx will be following this new CMS administration rate associated with the COVID-19 vaccine for applicable plans. Members will not have to pay this.