



## COVID-19 Vaccination Guide

### WHAT IS THE COVID-19 VACCINE?

The COVID-19 vaccine is a medicine that helps prevent you from getting sick from COVID-19. COVID-19 is an illness caused by a virus. The virus can move from person to person through germs. The vaccine can help you fight off these germs and not get sick. It is given to you through a shot in your arm.

There are several companies that make the vaccine. Pfizer and Moderna are the most common. Both Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require two shots for the vaccine to work. There is also a vaccine called Janssen now available. It only requires one shot. You have to make an appointment at a location labeled "Johnson & Johnson" to receive this single shot vaccine. Otherwise, when you get your first shot, you will be told whether you are getting Pfizer or Moderna's vaccine, and when you need to come back for your second shot. There might be other kinds of vaccines in the future. The vaccines currently available have been tested and proven to be safe and effective.

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### CAN I GET THE VACCINE NOW?

Because the vaccine is new and there are not enough doses for everyone, only certain people can get the vaccine now. As of March 4, 2021, the following people are eligible in Mississippi to receive a vaccine:

- All Healthcare Workers and EMT/paramedics
- Persons 65 years of age or older
- Persons 18 - 64 years of age with underlying medical condition
- All teachers/staff/employees in K-12, preschool or childcare settings
- All first responders (including law enforcement, public safety, fire services and emergency management officials)

You should either live in Mississippi or work in Mississippi to receive the vaccination in Mississippi.



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### **WHAT IS AN "UNDERLYING MEDICAL CONDITION"? DOES THAT INCLUDE MY DISABILITY?**

If you have one of the following health conditions, you are qualified to get the vaccine: cancer, chronic kidney disease, COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), Down Syndrome, heart conditions (such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies), immunocompromised state (also known as a weakened immune system) from an organ transplant. Obesity, severe obesity, pregnancy, sickle cell disease, diabetes, and smoking also qualify as reasons to get the vaccine. Current rules also allow for "other medical conditions" to be a reason to get the vaccine, as determined by your medical provider. There are a number of other conditions, including having a disability, that might allow you to receive the vaccine now. Talk to your doctor if you have questions or want to know if you should get the vaccine now.

Currently, you just have to confirm you have one of these conditions when you sign up for your appointment. You do not have to say which one and you do not have to show proof.

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### **HOW DO I GET THE VACCINE? WHERE DO I GO? HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?**

There are many locations throughout Mississippi where you can get the vaccine. Each county in the state has a place where you can get the vaccine through the Mississippi State Department of Health. You will drive through these locations and receive the vaccination in your car. You can be driven by someone else and/or bring a support person with you to help you through the process. Because doses are currently limited, appointments can fill up fast, but new appointments will continue to open.

If you want to get the vaccine through the health department, you will make an appointment online at [covidvaccine.umc.edu](https://covidvaccine.umc.edu). If you are not able to access or use the online appointment form, you can also call the state's COVID-19 hotline at 877-978-6453 to make your appointment. You will go to your designated spot on the date and time of your appointment. There will be people there to help direct you. Have your appointment confirmation with you and be prepared to complete a form that asks you questions about you and your health, including allergies or if you have previously had COVID-19. There are also pharmacies, like some Mississippi Walmart, CVS, and Kroger locations, where you can receive the vaccine. You can contact your local pharmacy to find out more.

It is free to receive the vaccine through the state or at the pharmacy. The vaccine itself is free. However, if you go to a doctor's office to get your shot, there is a small chance you would have to pay a fee for the visit.

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### **I DON'T MEET THE REQUIREMENTS TO GET THE VACCINE NOW. WHEN CAN I GET IT?**

The vaccine will be available for more groups of people, based on their health and jobs, in the next few months. Disability Rights Mississippi will update this page as groups are added, and share on our website and on social media. Again, if you feel that you should receive the vaccine now because of your disability or a medical condition, please talk to your doctor. Eventually, the vaccine will be widely available for everyone, like the flu shot.



## **IS THE VACCINE SAFE? WILL IT GIVE ME COVID-19?**

Each vaccine has been tested by scientists and approved to be safe. Before you get the vaccine, you will be given information on the medicine and can learn about its safety. You can also talk to your doctor if you have concerns. The vaccine will not and does not give you COVID-19. It protects you from the virus. You may feel tired, have a fever, or aches after the shot for a few hours. This is normal and is a way the vaccine shows it is working.

If you have had a reaction to a vaccine in the past, or are allergic to an ingredient in the vaccine, talk to your doctor to decide if it is safe for you to get the vaccine.

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## **CAN MY CHILD GET THE VACCINE?**

Currently in Mississippi, the vaccine is only available for those over 16 who meet the criteria listed above. It is not known yet if the vaccine will be available for younger children later.

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## **DO I HAVE TO GET THE VACCINE?**

At this time, the state will not make you get the vaccine. A doctor might encourage you to get the vaccine for your safety, but they cannot make you to get it. An employer can make vaccination a requirement, but there are a lot of exceptions related to any disability (or for reasons like religious beliefs). Even if you cannot receive the vaccine because of a disability, your employer cannot exclude you from the job unless there is no way to provide a reasonable modification (like working from home, working separately, or wearing a mask).

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## **WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I GET THE VACCINE?**

You are much less likely to get the COVID-19 virus, or give it to someone else, after receiving the vaccine. However, it is still possible you could get the virus or give it to someone else, even if you don't have symptoms. It is best that you continue wearing a mask if you are able. You should also continue social distancing, avoid large crowds, and follow all safety guidelines from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH).

## **SOURCES:**

[The CDC](#), [MSDH](#), [Walmart.com](#), [AARP](#)

## **WHAT IF I NEED MORE INFORMATION?**

For more information or assistance, please contact Disability Rights Mississippi at 601-968-0600. You can visit [www.drms.ms](http://www.drms.ms) for more resources.

The mission of Disability Rights Mississippi is to promote, protect and advocate for the legal and human rights of all people with disabilities, and to assist them with full inclusion in home, community, education and employment.

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