



COVID-19 Vaccine for Wisconsin Veterans Home Employees and Residents **December 21, 2020**

Wisconsin's long-term care facilities including our Wisconsin Veterans Homes have been given the go ahead to prepare and provide the COVID-19 vaccination to the employees and residents of our facilities. The Homes are part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Pharmacy partnership in which pharmacies such as CVS and Walgreens provide onsite vaccination clinics.

The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) anticipates receiving the Moderna vaccine, a two-step series that requires 28 days between vaccinations, and expects the first round of vaccinations may begin the week of December 28, 2020. The Pharmacy partnership is still working through the planning process and exact dates and times for the on-campus clinic hosted by CVS and/or Walgreens will be announced.

While the vaccine is not required for residents or staff, it is highly recommended.

A vaccine does not replace the need to continue other actions to stop the spread and keep ourselves healthy. This is especially true while we are in the process of administering vaccine, as it will take many months to provide vaccine to everyone who needs it. Even when people receive the vaccine they will not be immediately protected and will need to continue limiting gatherings, maintaining six feet of distance from others when going out, wearing a mask, and washing hands regularly.

Below are answers to anticipated questions about the administration of the vaccine at the Wisconsin Veterans Homes. This information below is from the CDC and other health care industry experts. It is not all-inclusive. We strongly encourage you to learn more about the vaccine at the links provided so you can make an educated decision as to what is right for you.

Why should I get a vaccine? Getting a COVID-19 vaccine can help protect you by creating an antibody response in your body without you having to become sick with COVID-19. A COVID-19 vaccine might prevent you from getting COVID-19, keep you from becoming seriously ill, or keep you from developing serious complications. Getting vaccinated also helps protect people around you from COVID-19, particularly people at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

What are some of the possible side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine? Will the vaccine make me sick? The vaccine cannot give you COVID-19. The vaccine can cause short-term discomfort (such as headache, muscle pains, fatigue, chills, fever, and pain at injection site) in a percentage of the people who receive it, particularly after the second dose. This does not mean that the vaccine has given you COVID-19. Rather, this means that the vaccine is causing your body's immune system to react and create antibodies to fight off the virus. In other words, if you feel some discomfort, then the vaccine is doing its job! Clinical trial participants reported that the discomfort went away after a day, sometimes sooner.

At the time of your vaccine, the vaccinator will provide you with a V-safe information sheet. V-safe records your vaccination, reports results of any side effects to the CDC, and remind you of your next dose via cell phone.

What if I had COVID-19 or I took a test that showed I have antibodies? Should I get the vaccine? Yes, even if you have had COVID-19 it is safe to get the vaccine and can add additional protection to you and others without causing any harm. It is unknown how long a COVID-19 survivor is protected from getting the virus again and re-infection is possible.

Is the vaccine safe? Safety is the most important requirement for the vaccine and is assessed in trials by independent experts. Approval of a vaccine for use in people involves multiple phases with different goals for assessing effectiveness and safety in different populations. There are a total of 4 phases and the vaccine must meet very intense safety criteria before completing each phase.

While most adverse side effects occur within six weeks of vaccine administration, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has required eight weeks of safety monitoring so it can track any side effects of the vaccine. The FDA also requires a minimum of 3,000 participants in vaccine trials to assess safety. The COVID-19 vaccine has been tested on tens of thousands of people. The FDA requires 50% efficacy of a COVID-19 vaccine. The Moderna vaccine is showing more than 94% efficacy. Further, two independent advisory committees comprised of medical and other experts who are vetted to eliminate conflict of interest evaluate the vaccine to ensure it is safe and effective.

You may be anxious about the speed with which a vaccine has been approved. While the vaccine followed the shorter emergency use authorization process for urgent health crises, no steps were skipped in the safety evaluation process. We encourage you to do additional research on vaccine safety at the links provided below.

How much does it cost? The COVID-19 vaccine is free. At the time of the vaccination clinic, our partner pharmacy, CVS, will ask for your insurance. CVS may charge your insurance an administration fee for giving the vaccine and tracking the data.

Additional Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- How the Vaccine Works: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/about-vaccines/how-they-work.html>
- Vaccine Safety: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/ensuringsafety/history/index.html>

Mayo Clinic

- Get the Facts: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/coronavirus-vaccine/art-20484859>

COVID Symptom Study

- <https://covid.joinzoe.com/post/covid-vaccines-expert-questions>