

SLHS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How many doses of the COVID-19 vaccine will I need?

Initial supply of COVID-19 vaccines will require two doses – 21 days apart for Pfizer and 28 days apart for Moderna.

2. Is the vaccine safe?

St. Lawrence Health System takes the health and safety of our patients and employees seriously and we are committed to ensuring the safe distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine in a timely manner. The Pfizer vaccine has been approved by public health agencies and is safe for use in most adults. The Pfizer vaccine has been proven to be 95 percent effective in preventing symptomatic COVID-19 when administered in two doses. For comparison, annual flu vaccination is between 40-60 percent effective in preventing influenza.

As with all pharmaceuticals, a patient's response to a vaccine is unique to their individual body and medical history. We encourage all patients to discuss the vaccine with their physician before administration.

3. Why should I receive the vaccine?

The vaccine is the most effective tool for eradicating this virus and ending this global pandemic. We encourage all our employees, as well as all members of our community, to consider a vaccine.

Since the start of the pandemic, caregivers have been at risk for contracting the coronavirus in their work caring for patients and the communities they serve. Numerous nurses, physicians and other clinicians around the country have contracted the virus, and some have died.

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4. Do I have to receive the vaccine?

We understand that the decision to receive a vaccine is an emotional issue, and we believe that decision is a personal one that should be made in consultation with a physician. However, the vaccine is the most effective tool for eradicating this virus and ending this global pandemic.

We encourage all our employees, as well as all members of our community, to consider a vaccine.

5. What if I have a recent laboratory proven case of COVID-19, do I still need to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

St. Lawrence Health System is advising employees and personnel who've had a laboratory proven case of COVID-19 within the past 90 days, to not receive the vaccine at this time.

6. What if I believe I had COVID-19 recently, should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Employees who believe they might have had COVID-19 but were not tested for the virus, are still encouraged to get the vaccine. There is no evidence that receiving the COVID-19 vaccine will have any adverse effects for individuals who have or recently had COVID-19.

7. What side effects could result from the vaccine?

Most people will experience no or minimal side effects following administration of the vaccine. Some patients, however, have reported experiencing side effects that include fever, aches, fatigue and other symptoms. While some of these symptoms may feel severe, they are temporary and typically resolve within a few days.

8. Is wearing a mask required when receiving the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, wearing a mask that covers the nose and mouth is required when receiving a COVID-19 vaccine.

9. Is there a cost for the COVID-19 vaccine?

Per the New York State Department of Health, providers may not bill for the cost of the vaccine but can bill the individual's health insurance for an administration fee. Providers vaccinating individuals with no health insurance or insurance that does not cover the administration fee can request reimbursement for the administration of the COVID-19 through the Provider Relief Fund.

10. Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccine?

No, it is a myth that you'll get COVID-19 from the COVID-19 vaccine. You will not get COVID-19 from the vaccine because the vaccine does not use the live virus.

It typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination. It is possible to become infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and get sick—this is because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection.

11. I'm pregnant. Should I receive the vaccine?

Given the lack of safety data on mRNA vaccines in pregnancy and the discordance among guidelines from various professional societies, SLHS is making no recommendations regarding vaccinating pregnant workers with this vaccine at this time. SLHS will not exclude pregnant workers from getting the vaccine. Pregnant workers should discuss the risks and benefits of the vaccine with their obstetrician.

12. Are vaccines available for children?

COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) vaccine trials have only just begun in children and there is limited information available. Children and young people have a very low risk of COVID-19, severe disease or death due to SARS-CoV-2 compared to adults and so COVID-19 vaccines are not routinely recommended for children and young people under 16 years of age.

13. Once I get vaccinated, will I test positive on a COVID-19 viral test?

The COVID-19 vaccine will not cause you to test positive on viral tests. If your body develops an immune response, which is the goal of vaccination, there is a possibility you may test positive on some antibody tests.

14. Who should get the COVID-19 vaccine first?

Frontline health care workers at acute care sites will be prioritized as first vaccine recipients, followed by additional employees and staff.

15. Will there be enough vaccines for everyone?

At first, there will be a limited supply of the COVID-19 vaccine which means that not everyone will be able to be vaccinated right away. This supply will increase in 2021.

That is why the federal government began investing in select vaccine manufacturers to help increase their ability to quickly make and distribute a large amount of the COVID-19 vaccine. This will allow the United States to start with as much vaccine as possible and continually increase the supply in the weeks and months to follow.

16. Why would a vaccine be needed if we can do other things, like social distance and wear masks, to prevent the virus from spreading?

Vaccines work with an individual's immune system to prepare your body to fight the virus if exposed. Social distancing and wearing a mask helps reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus and spreading it to others.

17. Do I need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others if I have received the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. Even after getting the vaccine, it is still important to continue using all the tools available to help stop the spread of the virus, such as wearing a mask, social distancing, and cleaning your hands because it will take several months for everyone to have access to the vaccine.