

The coronavirus vaccine: A doctor answers 5 questions

15 December 2020, by Jason R. McKnight



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With the Food and Drug Administration issuing emergency use authorization for a vaccine to limit the spread of coronavirus, you might have questions about what this means for you. If you do, [send them to The Conversation](#), and we will find a physician or researcher to answer them. Here, Dr. Jason McKnight, a primary care physician at Texas A&M University, answers five questions about the rollout and distribution underway.

I hear that I might still have to wear a mask even after I get vaccinated. Why?

It will likely be the continued recommendation that everyone wear a mask when in public even after receiving the vaccination for COVID-19. While these vaccines appear to be highly effective in preventing infection from the disease, even at [95% efficacy](#), that means approximately 5% of people receiving the vaccination may still become infected. Wearing a mask [helps decrease the transmission of the virus](#) in those situations in which the vaccine does not prevent the illness.

Further, continuing to wear a mask may help

prevent the spread of other respiratory illnesses, which can help prevent overwhelming the [health care system](#), as we are already seeing during the pandemic. Finally, it is possible that some individuals receiving the vaccine may have an asymptomatic infection, and wearing a mask also helps prevent the spread of illness in that situation.

If I get the Pfizer vaccine for the first dose, how can I make sure I get the Pfizer vaccine the second time?

The distribution of the Pfizer vaccine is meant to [match the need for the second dose](#). The clinic, hospital or pharmacy where you are vaccinated will keep a record of the vaccine that you received, as will you, to help ensure that your second dose matches the first dose.

How will public health experts track the safety of the vaccine as it rolls out to bigger groups of people?

Public health experts as well as the vaccine manufacturers will continue to track the safety of the vaccine in multiple ways. First, the people who are vaccinated in the [clinical trials](#) will continue to be followed to ensure there are no long-term safety issues. Further, there is what is called a [phase IV post-marketing surveillance trial](#), which will allow many people who are vaccinated to be followed long term to ensure no safety complications arise and to ensure that the vaccine remains as effective as originally thought.

How will I know when it's my turn to get a vaccine?

To know when it is your turn to be vaccinated, contact either your state department of health or your health care provider. They will be receiving updates and further information about who is to be vaccinated and when. If you have questions about the [vaccine](#) and timing of administration, contact

your health care provider.

Where will I get a vaccine?

While the exact distribution of vaccines is not yet solidified, and is dependent on the state in which you reside, most vaccines will likely be sent to hospital systems, health care providers' offices, and some pharmacies. To find out the nearest location where you can be vaccinated, contact your local [health](#) department or your [health care provider](#).

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