



## Memorandum

DATE: March 12, 2021  
TO: All MTS Employees  
FROM: Sharon Cooney, Chief Executive Officer  
SUBJECT: Public Transportation Workers Eligible for COVID-19 Vaccination

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We are pleased to report that the California Department of Public Health has authorized public transportation workers to be vaccinated for COVID-19 effective March 15, 2021! I am relieved to know that all of you will be able to take this important step to protect yourselves and your families in the near future.

### Vaccination is Safe and Effective

As you may already know, all three versions of the COVID-19 vaccine have proven to be safe and very effective. The consensus among healthcare professionals is anyone who is eligible should be vaccinated as soon as possible, and they should take whichever vaccine is available. There are two fliers from Kaiser Permanente attached to this memorandum that provide further information about the COVID-19 vaccine. You can also click this link to watch a three-minute video on the vaccine: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Db9OwsXUmTc&feature=youtu.be>

### How to Schedule Your Vaccination

You may schedule an appointment online at any vaccination pod (e.g., Petco Park Superstation, Chula Vista Superstation, or many others) at <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov> and by clicking the “COVID-19 Information” link at the top of the page. The Federal Government pays all vaccination costs so you will have no out of pocket costs (e.g., copay) regardless of where you are vaccinated.

You may also schedule an appointment at a pharmacy (e.g., CVS or Kroger) or directly through a local medical provider (Kaiser Permanente, Sharp Health and Scripps Health). Each pharmacy and/or medical provider has their own process for scheduling appointments. You do not need to schedule an appointment through your own healthcare provider. Every authorized vaccination location is required to make appointments available to any person who meets eligibility requirements. Please have patience and be diligent, as appointments can be challenging to schedule since demand for the vaccine is extremely high. Additionally, since the addition of Public Transit Workers was just announced, some providers may not have the most up-to-date eligibility list. I attached a communication from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) announcing that you are eligible to be vaccinated that you can take to your appointment.

To show proof of eligibility at your appointment, please bring your MTS identification card and this memo with the CDPH attachment.



### Future On-Site Vaccination Opportunities

MTS has contracted with an occupational medicine provider to conduct on-site vaccination clinics at MTS as soon as sufficient vaccine supply is available. As you have probably seen in the news, vaccine supply is still very limited. We continue to work with the County to get vaccine allocated to MTS so that we can administer vaccinations on site. The Human Resources department will send out full details as soon as we are able to schedule on-site clinics.

Thank you for your dedication to public transit!

#### Attachments:

1. Kaiser Permanente – COVID-19 Vaccine Safety and Effectiveness Flyer
2. Kaiser Permanente – COVID-19 Vaccine 101 Flyer
3. California Department of Public Health Provider Bulletin, dated March 11, 2021

cc: COVID-19 Web Pages  
All Employees Via Text Message  
All Bulletin Boards



# The COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective

The COVID-19 vaccine is a vital tool to help end the pandemic. Due to the fast arrival of the vaccine, there's been a lot of conflicting information about its safety and effectiveness. It's OK if you have questions. Here's fact-based information from our medical experts and doctors.

## Vaccine safety and effectiveness

### Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe and effective?

Yes. The COVID-19 vaccine went through rigorous clinical trials to prove it's safe and effective to use. The clinical trials included people 16+ of all genders, races, and ethnicities. The vaccine was found to be effective and safe for all participants. The COVID-19 vaccine is held to the exact same safety standards as any other vaccine.

### How effective is the COVID-19 vaccine?

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is 95% effective at preventing COVID-19, and the Moderna vaccine is 94.1% effective, according to Food and Drug Administration (FDA) data. In addition, Johnson & Johnson has applied for emergency use authorization for a single-dose vaccine. We'll have more information about this vaccine once the data has been shared and reviewed as part

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of the approval process. However, initial reports pending review suggest that the Johnson & Johnson vaccine may be as effective in preventing serious illness.

### **How was the COVID-19 vaccine developed so quickly?**

Researchers began developing a vaccine for COVID-19 in January 2020, based on decades of understanding immune response and how vaccines work. The COVID-19 vaccine went through the exact same development process as any other vaccine – only faster. No shortcuts were taken. Due to the serious public health emergency, the common reasons vaccine development takes a long time were removed. For example:

- **Shared research** - To speed up the process, scientists and researchers shared more than 30 years of research on technology and vaccine development with each other.
- **Funding** - Billions of dollars were urgently invested in vaccine development to help stop the rapid spread of COVID-19.
- **Vaccine participants** - Many people wanted to help and volunteered for clinical trials.
- **Rapid results** - Vaccine results could be measured sooner since high numbers of people were getting infected with COVID-19 so quickly.

Due to all these extraordinary efforts and unprecedented circumstances, the COVID-19 vaccine was developed in record time following all the FDA's safety, effectiveness, and manufacturing standards.

## **Vaccine side effects**

### **What are the potential side effects?**

You may experience minor side effects, which are temporary and expected. It's a normal sign that your body is building immunity to the virus. These may include soreness at the injection site, fatigue, fever, muscle aches, headache, and chills. They usually last for just a few days after you get the vaccine. Severe allergic reactions can happen, but they are very rare.

### **Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccine?**

No. None of the approved COVID-19 vaccines or those currently in development in the United States contain the live virus that causes COVID-19. This means that a COVID-19 vaccine can't make you sick with COVID-19.

## **Getting a vaccine**

### **Is there a cost for the vaccine?**

No. You should not be charged anything for a COVID-19 vaccination no matter where you get it. In fact, you should be suspicious of any entity that wants to charge you for a vaccine. Vaccine doses were purchased with taxpayer dollars and are required by the federal government to be given at no cost.

### **Is the COVID-19 vaccine mandatory?**

No, getting the COVID-19 vaccine is not mandatory. Vaccination is your choice to make, but it's highly recommended. Vaccination is an important, personal choice you can make to protect yourself and the people you love. By choosing to get vaccinated when it's your turn, you can help bring an end to the pandemic.

# Vaccines

## What they are and how they can save your life

Vaccines are a breakthrough of modern medicine – and are the best protection we have against many serious illnesses. The World Health Organization estimates that vaccines can save between 2 and 3 million lives every year.<sup>1</sup>

### What is a vaccine?

Vaccines are a safe and effective way of protecting people against diseases and illnesses. When you get a vaccine, your immune system will develop resistance to that disease. You typically get a vaccine as a shot, but some can also be given as a nasal spray you inhale or a medication you drink.

### How do vaccines work?

When you get a vaccine, your body will produce antibodies against that disease. Antibodies are proteins produced naturally by your immune system to fight disease. Your body will then be able to recognize and fight the disease if you're ever exposed to it later. This can significantly lower the impact of a disease or prevent you from catching it.

### Why should I get vaccinated?

Vaccines are a safe way to prevent disease and save lives. Plus, they can protect you against a disease for a year, decades, or even a lifetime – depending on the specific disease. That's what makes vaccines so powerful. Rather than treating a disease after you get it, vaccines prevent you from getting sick in the first place.

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1. "Vaccines and Immunization: What is Vaccination," World Health Organization, December 31, 2020, [www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/vaccines-and-immunization-what-is-vaccination](http://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/vaccines-and-immunization-what-is-vaccination).

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## What you need to know about the COVID-19 vaccine

### How does the COVID-19 vaccine work?

SARS-CoV-2 is the virus that causes COVID-19. The COVID-19 vaccine was created to prevent this virus from attacking your body and making you sick. The vaccine was designed to make your immune system respond and develop immunity. It does this by helping your body make antibodies to block the virus. Think of these antibodies like bodyguards. The antibodies stop the virus from reproducing in your body and making you sick.

### How effective is the COVID-19 vaccine?

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is 95% effective at preventing COVID-19, and the Moderna vaccine is 94.1% effective, according to Food and Drug Administration (FDA) data. In addition, Johnson & Johnson has applied for emergency use authorization for a single-dose vaccine.

### Does effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine differ by age, sex, race, or ethnicity?

Effectiveness of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccine doesn't differ by age, sex, race, or ethnicity. The results of vaccine efficacy come from clinical trials that included a diverse range and age of participants, including males and females from a variety of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

### Is it safe to get a COVID-19 vaccine if you have an ongoing health condition like diabetes?

If you have an ongoing health condition like diabetes, you should talk to your doctor and confirm it's safe to get the COVID-19 vaccine. In general, if you have an ongoing condition, you're at an increased risk of getting severely sick from COVID-19. So, getting the COVID-19 vaccine is one way to protect yourself from the virus. According to the FDA, people with ongoing conditions can get the COVID-19 vaccine if they haven't had an allergic reaction to any of the ingredients in the vaccine.<sup>2</sup> It's best to talk with your doctor so they can assess your personal situation.

### Is there a cost for a COVID-19 vaccine?

No. You should not be charged anything for a COVID-19 vaccination no matter where you get it. In fact, you should be suspicious of any entity that wants to charge you for a vaccine. Vaccine doses were purchased with taxpayer dollars and are required by the federal government to be given at no cost.

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2. "Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccination," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, January 25, 2021, [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html).

# Provider Bulletin

February 12, 2021, *updated 3/11/2021*

**To:** All vaccinators and local health departments

**From:** California Department of Public Health

We thank you for your tremendous work to vaccinate Californians.

This bulletin is meant to update you on current guidance for distributing vaccine.

## **Vaccine Prioritization (as vaccine supply allows)**

1. Currently vaccines may be distributed to populations identified in Phase 1A and Phase 1B, Tier 1.
2. Beginning March 15, healthcare providers may use their clinical judgement to vaccinate individuals age 16-64 who are deemed to be at the very highest risk for morbidity and mortality from COVID-19 as a direct result of one or more of the following severe health conditions, and individuals in specified settings are eligible to be vaccinated due to increased risk, as specified in this provider bulletin:
  - **Cancer**, current with debilitated or immunocompromised state
  - **Chronic kidney disease**, stage 4 or above
  - **Chronic pulmonary disease**, oxygen dependent
  - **Down syndrome**
  - **Immunocompromised state** (weakened immune system) from **solid organ transplant**
  - **Pregnancy**
  - **Sickle cell disease**
  - **Heart conditions**, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies (excludes hypertension)
  - **Severe obesity** (Body Mass Index  $\geq 40$  kg/m<sup>2</sup>)

- **Type 2 diabetes mellitus** with hemoglobin A1c level greater than 7.5%

OR

If as a result of a developmental or other severe high-risk disability one or more of the following applies:

- The individual is likely to develop severe life-threatening illness or death from COVID-19 infection
- Acquiring COVID-19 will limit the individual's ability to receive ongoing care or services vital to their well-being and survival
- Providing adequate and timely COVID care will be particularly challenging as a result of the individual's disability

OR

*Update on March 11, 2021:* Individuals who reside or work in a high risk congregate residential setting, such as an incarceration/detention facility, homeless shelter, or behavioral health facility, as these settings are high risk for outbreaks and have a concentration of individuals with high risk chronic health conditions. This includes all people experiencing homelessness, who are at risk of transitioning into congregate settings at short notice.

OR

*Update on March 11, 2021:* **Public transit workers**, including airport workers for commercial airlines (not private airplanes), as they are at high risk for occupational exposure and maintaining continuity of operations is critical.

The list of eligible conditions is subject to change as additional scientific evidence is published and as CDPH obtains and analyzes additional state-specific data.

This provider bulletin is meant to clarify and update California's vaccine administration prioritization policy. It may be updated periodically to aid all vaccinators as the state moves through its efforts to vaccinate all eligible populations and as supplies increase over time.

Thank you for your partnership and work to protect Californians during the pandemic.