



Covid-19 Vaccination Statement and FAQs

Soon, Pima County will be getting Covid-19 vaccinations and will start the process of distribution to its residents. We want to state that as a practice **we support the distribution of this vaccine and encourage everyone >18 years to receive it when they are able.** Following are some FAQs that we have been getting in our office that we'd like to answer as best we can.

Which vaccines is Tucson getting and is there a difference? Whether Tucson receives the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine remains to be seen. Each vaccine has been studied in 3 phases and has been deemed safe and effective. It does not matter which one you get. There is no practical difference between them clinically, only in storage and administration details.

Did the speed by which the vaccines were developed make them less safe? No. The phases of trial for each vaccine were the same as for any prior vaccine. But instead of submitting each phase, waiting for peer review, then starting the next phase, these phases were rolling. That means that they started phase 2 while awaiting phase 1 reviews. This sped up the process immensely, which was necessary due to the spread of the disease. Secondly, the technology of mRNA vaccines does not use eggs or incubation as a part of the vaccine development. This allowed for faster production. The actual steps of development and observation were not delayed or rushed in a matter that altered safety. In fact, these vaccines are impressive in that they are so efficacious AND safe at the same time.

Will I shed the virus and be a risk to others after I receive the vaccine? No. mRNA vaccines are not live. They will not give you Covid-19 disease and they do not make you a risk to others.

What can we expect when we get the vaccine? Expect 2 shots, given about 26-30 days apart. Anticipate some fever and muscle aches that can be significant for 1-2 days, especially after the second shot.

Who is getting the first roll-out of the vaccine and how will it be distributed? After careful consideration by scientific agencies, it has been decided that health care workers, nursing home residents and their care-takers will be the first to receive the vaccine. Nursing home residents comprise 20% of all fatalities from Covid-19.

Protecting them with a vaccine keeps them alive and well. At the same time it alleviates the overwhelming number of ICU and hospital beds that are currently needed.

Who is in the second roll-out? The next group is essential workers: teachers, firefighters, police, correctional facility staff, transportation and agricultural workers. Then the third group is those over 65 years of age or any adult with a comorbid condition.

When will I know that it's my turn for the vaccine? The details about roll-out to the first group and all thereafter are not available at this time. We will communicate that to you as soon as we know.

What is the status of a Covid-19 vaccine for children? Currently, phase 3 trials for children ages 12-17 are in progress. There is no vaccine available for this age group (or younger) at this time. It is anticipated that there will be a vaccine for children, but maybe not until Fall of 2021. We will make every effort to be a site of distribution for this pediatric version and will encourage our patients to get this vaccine once safety data and efficacy results are complete and deem it safe and efficacious.

Do I still need to wear a mask after I get the vaccine? YES. As with all vaccines, the Covid-19 vaccine appears to be very efficacious at avoiding severe disease but is not 100% effective as prevention. Until we reach a significant number of the population (~70%) that is vaccinated, we will need to continue ALL measures of protection including social distancing, hand washing and mask-wearing.

How long will I be protected after getting the vaccine? We don't know. It does not appear that getting the actual Covid-19 disease creates life long immunity as we have seen reinfection. The vaccine has not been around and followed long enough to say how long it will confer protection. This should not keep you from getting it. This is the same for most vaccines. That is why we have boosters. Whether boosters will be necessary for Covid-19 remains to be seen.

I'm pregnant. Can I get the vaccine? Probably, but we don't know for sure yet. mRNA vaccines do not seem to be a threat to a fetus. The Section on Maternal Fetal Medicine has recently pushed for furthered and continued participation of pregnant women in clinical trials. We will keep up to date on this population and forward information to you.

I'm nursing. Can I get the vaccine? There is no data confirming this, but there is a scientific consensus that an mRNA vaccine should prove no increased risk to the infant of a nursing mother. Our recommendation is to consider that and consult with your OB.

Who pays for the vaccine when I get it? The vaccine itself will be paid for by the federal government. There may be an administration fee charged by the agency giving the vaccine that should be paid by your insurance or if you are uninsured, reimbursed by the Department of Health and Human Services.

See <https://www.hrsa.gov/coviduninsuredclaim>

Resources:

Pima County Testing Sites:

<https://webcms.pima.gov/cms/One.aspx?pageld=575060>

CDC website FAQs:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>

AZ Dept of Health and Human Services Covid-19 Roll out plan:

<https://bloximages.newyork1.vip.townnews.com/azfamily.com/content/tncms/assets/v3/editorial/a/af/aaf40e5e-1303-11eb-aa53-277993d1d518/5f8f2f83cc828.file.pdf>