



OKLAHOMA

This is an official Oklahoma Health Alert

Network Health Notification

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Reference: N/A

Heartfelt Plea to Healthcare Providers in Oklahoma

As COVID-19 continues to persist and evolve within our communities, it is critical for trusted leaders, like yourself, to remind and encourage your patients, at each encounter, to get vaccinated. Many resources are available to you (noted below), to share with your patients to help make this discussion easier. Additionally, we encourage you to also talk with your patients about sharing the information with their family and friends.

Currently, the best way to lessen the spread of COVID-19, including the Delta variant, is to get as many people vaccinated as possible. By providing education and thoughtful conversation about the scientific facts of the vaccines, you can help lessen the spread and decrease fear and anxiety surrounding the virus and the vaccine.

Information to share with patients

- Getting the vaccine as soon as possible protects you and others around you from getting very ill or being hospitalized from COVID-19, even if you've already been exposed or have had COVID-19 or are considered low-risk.
- COVID 19-vaccines are effective. They can help keep you from getting and spreading the virus that causes COVID-19.
- COVID-19 vaccines also help keep you from getting seriously ill, even if you do get COVID-19, which itself could have serious, life-threatening complications, and the possibility of long COVID.
- Get vaccinated regardless of whether you already had COVID-19, as studies have shown that vaccination provides a strong boost in protection, even in people who have recovered from COVID-19.
- COVID-19 is still a threat to people who are unvaccinated. Some people who get COVID-19 can become severely ill, which could result in hospitalization and death, and some people have ongoing health problems several weeks or even longer after getting infected. Even people who did not have symptoms when they were infected can have these ongoing health problems.
- The COVID-19 vaccines available to us are safe, effective and are undergoing some of the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history.
- Every day, thousands of Oklahomans are safely reaching full vaccination status.
- Our vaccination efforts can make a huge difference in keeping our families and communities safe and healthy in the long term.

Message #: OK-HAN_354 / Reference: n/a

Oklahoma State Department of Health / Acute Disease Service / 123 S Robert S Kerr Ave, Oklahoma City, OK 73102
405-426-8710 (ph) / 405-900-7591 (fax) <http://ads.health.ok.gov>



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Resources:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/vaccine-benefits.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/keythingstoknow.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/hcp/faq.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/clinical-considerations/covid-19-vaccines-us.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html>

This message has been distributed to Primary Care and Infectious Disease Physicians, Family Medicine Physicians, Obstetrics, Pediatricians, Pulmonologists, Infection Preventionists, Laboratorians, Urgent Care Centers, Emergency Departments, and State and Local Health Officials

The Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) Acute Disease Service (ADS) is now using 4 types of documents to provide important information to medical and public health professionals, and to other interested persons:

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert

Provides vital, time-sensitive information for a specific incident or situation; warrants immediate action or attention by health officials, laboratorians, clinicians, and members of the public and conveys the highest level of importance.

Health Advisory

Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; contains recommendations or actionable items to be performed by public health officials, laboratorians, and/or clinicians; may not require immediate action.

Health Update

Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate attention.

Health Info/Event

Provides general public health information; unlikely to require immediate action.

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FAQs

Will it hurt when I get the vaccine/what should I expect?

- You may feel a pinch when you get the vaccine itself, and afterward, you should expect some soreness and/or swelling in the arm where you got the vaccine. It should go away within a few days.
- There is a chance you may also experience fever, chills, tiredness, or a headache after you get your vaccine. These side effects are entirely normal and typical of other common vaccines such as your annual flu shot, and should all go away within a few days.

Is the vaccine safe?

- The vaccines that are available to Oklahomans are safe and effective. The FDA has rigorous scientific and regulatory processes in place that ensure the safety, effectiveness, and quality of COVID-19 vaccines.
- Throughout the entire process, the vaccines were evaluated for their safety and efficacy. Oklahomans should feel confident in receiving the vaccines.
- All three vaccines available to Oklahomans now have been proven highly effective to keep you from getting seriously ill, being hospitalized or dying from COVID-19.
- We encourage all Oklahomans to receive the vaccine when it becomes available to them.

Does the vaccine have negative long-term effects?

- This vaccine is proven safe by the FDA and has been tested thoroughly. No widespread long-term negative effects have been reported so far. All vaccines have the potential for temporary side effects.
- From the available data, the benefits of a vaccine outweigh the risk.

Which vaccine is better/more effective?

- All available vaccines are highly effective in protecting you from COVID-19. This includes people over the age of 65, as well as adults with underlying health problems that put them at high risk for COVID-19.
- All three vaccines were granted Emergency Use Authorization by the FDA, meaning they are safe, effective and ready for Americans to use. The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine has now been granted full approval by the FDA for people age 16 and older.
- **The best COVID-19 vaccine is the one you can get right away.** All three vaccines will help significantly to reduce your chances of getting seriously ill or dying as a result of COVID-19.

Are there side effects to any of the vaccines? Should I be concerned?

- After vaccination, you may experience some common side effects, which are normal signs that your immune system is functioning properly, and your body is building protection.
- Everyone is unique — some experience mild to moderate side effects, while others have none.

- The side effects commonly reported for the COVID-19 vaccine are in line with those of other common vaccines, like the flu shot.
- Side effects could include soreness, redness or swelling on the arm where you got the shot. You might feel fatigue, headache, muscle pain, chills or fever.
- Any side effects are expected to go away after a few days.

Why risk vaccine side effects? I'd rather just deal with COVID-19.

- While some people have mild symptoms from COVID-19, others have had very severe cases that have hospitalized them or caused their death — even young, healthy people. There can also be serious [long-term impacts of COVID-19](#): Fatigue, shortness of breath, cough, joint pain, chest pain, brain fog and many others.
- In contrast, all side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine (fever, chills, tiredness, soreness or a headache) will go away within a few days. The vaccine makes it much less likely that you'll have to go to the hospital or will die from COVID-19.

Why do I need the vaccine if I'm young and healthy?

- Even if you are young and healthy, getting the vaccine will not only help protect you, but also help protect those around you from getting COVID-19, too — especially people who are at high risk, like the elderly and those who have other medical conditions.
- COVID-19 vaccines also help keep you from getting seriously ill even if you do get COVID-19, which itself could have serious, life-threatening complications, and the possibility of long COVID.
- If more people get the vaccine, it will be easier for us to keep schools and businesses open, and get back to normal life.

Was the vaccine rushed?

- No, the vaccine went through all the usual FDA-required assessments and regulatory processes.
- With scientists and manufacturers around the world all focusing on combating COVID-19, parts of the vaccine production and manufacturing process were run concurrently.
- The currently available COVID-19 vaccines are as safe and effective as any other FDA-approved vaccine.

Does the Johnson & Johnson vaccine cause blood clotting?

Reports of adverse events following the use of J&J/Janssen vaccine suggest an increased risk of a rare adverse event called thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS) i.e. blood clots with low platelets

- This type of adverse reaction following administration of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is extremely rare.
- The reports reviewed all occurred in women between 18 and 59 years old, and symptoms occurred within two weeks of vaccine administration.
- If you have received a Johnson & Johnson vaccine over two weeks ago, the risk of experiencing this reaction is very low.
 - We recommend that you call your doctor if you received the vaccine within the last two weeks and experience the following symptoms:
 - Persistent headaches

- Abdominal pain
 - Leg pain
 - Shortness of breath
- These symptoms may feel significantly different from the mild flu-like symptoms you might typically experience after getting a vaccine.
- All COVID-19 vaccines administered in the U.S. are undergoing some of the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history.
 - To date, the CDC’s monitoring system has not detected any cases of blood clotting in association with the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines.

How does an mRNA vaccine work to protect against COVID-19?

- mRNA vaccines are a type of vaccine to protect against infectious diseases. mRNA vaccines teach our cells how to make a protein — or even just a piece of a protein — that triggers an immune response inside our bodies. That immune response, which produces antibodies, is what protects us from getting infected if the real virus enters our bodies.
- COVID-19 mRNA vaccines give instructions for our cells to make a harmless piece of what is called the “spike protein.” The spike protein is found on the surface of the virus that causes COVID-19. Our immune systems recognize that the protein doesn’t belong there and begin building an immune response and making antibodies, like what happens in natural infection against COVID-19.
- At the end of the process, our bodies have learned how to protect against future infection.
- The benefit of mRNA vaccines, like all vaccines, is that those vaccinated gain this protection without having to risk the serious consequences of getting sick with COVID-19.

Will the vaccine have any side effects for breastfeeding mothers or pregnant women?

- Pregnant and recently pregnant women are more likely to get severely ill with COVID-19 compared with non-pregnant women.
- Getting a COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy can protect you from severe illness from COVID-19.
- If you are pregnant, you can receive a COVID-19 vaccine.
- The CDC and the FDA have safety monitoring systems in place to gather information about COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy and are closely monitoring that information.
- Data so far has not identified any safety concerns for pregnant women who were vaccinated or for their babies.
- mRNA vaccines are not live virus vaccines and are not thought to be a risk to breastfeeding infants.
- The J&J/Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine is a viral vector vaccine i.e. it uses a modified version of a different virus (the vector) to deliver important instructions to our cells. Vaccines that use the same viral vector have been given to pregnant women in all trimesters of pregnancy, including in a large-scale Ebola vaccination trial. No adverse pregnancy-related outcomes, including adverse outcomes that affected the infant, were associated with vaccination in these trials.

What should I know about new COVID-19 strains or variants? Have new strains been detected in Oklahoma?

- Yes, some new strains have been detected in Oklahoma through sequencing capabilities at the Public Health Lab in Stillwater.
- OSDH will continue to monitor for new strains and will keep the public updated on new information as it becomes available.
- New strains of viruses occur when there is a change to the virus' genes. It is the nature of RNA viruses, such as the coronavirus, to evolve and change gradually, so new strains are not unexpected.
- There will likely be other new strains as the virus continues to evolve.
- Some strains are felt to spread faster than others.
- Hence, it is more important than ever that Oklahomans take precautions to protect themselves and others.

Does the COVID-19 vaccine work on new strains?

- Right now, the evidence we have shows that the vaccines currently in use are largely effective against variants of COVID-19. So it is important to continue our progress through our vaccination efforts.

If I had COVID-19 already, do I still need to take the vaccine?

- We recommend you receive the vaccine, even if you have already had COVID-19.
- The protection someone gains from having an infection (called natural immunity) varies depending on the disease, and it varies from person to person. Since this virus is relatively new, we don't know how long natural immunity might last, and how effective natural immunity would be against newer variants.
- Immunity conferred by vaccines is expected to be more robust as well as longer-lasting than natural immunity.
- Getting the vaccine, even if you already had COVID-19, will help you protect yourself and others.

Can I still spread COVID-19 once I get the vaccine?

- COVID-19 vaccines do reduce the risk of people spreading COVID-19.

How much does the vaccine cost?

- COVID-19 vaccine doses purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars will be provided to Americans free of charge.

Do I have to retake my vaccine if my second dose appointment is later than 21 or 28 days?

- No - there is some flexibility in when you can get your second dose.
- It's recommended you should get your second dose 21-28 (depending on which vaccine) days after your first dose of the vaccine. However, it can be longer if needed, as the timeline is flexible.

- While recommended, you do not need to schedule your second dose appointment on exactly the 21-day or 28-day timeline.
- If it is not feasible to adhere to the recommended interval and a delay in vaccination is unavoidable, the second dose of Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines may be administered up to 6 weeks (42 days) after the first dose.
- If the second dose is administered beyond these intervals, there is no need to restart the series.

What does “fully vaccinated” mean?

- Individuals are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after they have received the final dose of their vaccine of their initiating series (i.e., second dose of vaccine in a two-dose series like Pfizer or Moderna, or after they have received a single dose in a single-dose series like Johnson & Johnson).

What precautions do I need to follow if I haven't been able to get the vaccine yet/if I don't plan to get the vaccine?

- If you are not vaccinated, we recommend you keep following the usual safety precautions: wear a mask, wash your hands and watch your distance.
- You should also avoid gathering with others outside of your household and limit unnecessary outings and travel as much as possible.
- Unvaccinated travelers should:
 - Get tested 1-3 days prior to travel.
 - Get tested 3-5 days after travel and self-quarantine for 7 days with a negative test.
- This may change as more Oklahomans get the vaccine, but for the time being, you and others are at risk from COVID-19.
- The best way to protect yourself and others is by continuing to take precautions.

What are breakthrough infections?

- A breakthrough case occurs when a person who has been fully vaccinated becomes infected with COVID-19.

Why do breakthrough infections occur?

- [Vaccine breakthrough cases are expected](#), not just for COVID-19, but for all vaccines.
- COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective and are a critical tool to bring the pandemic under control. However, no vaccine is 100% effective to prevent cases of COVID-19 — we've known this from the beginning.
- There will be a small proportion of fully vaccinated people who still get infected with COVID-19.
- Causes of breakthrough infection can include: an individual with a weak immune response, new strains or variants.

Does it mean the vaccine doesn't work? Why should people get the vaccine if you can still get sick?

- The vaccine is working as intended, and we still recommend everyone to get the vaccine to protect themselves against COVID-19.
- No vaccine is 100% effective to keep you from getting infected. It's not impossible to still get COVID-19 once you're vaccinated, but it's much less likely.
- Even taking breakthrough cases into account, the vaccine significantly reduces the chance that you'll get COVID-19.
- If you do get COVID-19, evidence suggests that it's much less likely that you'll have a severe case that could cause hospitalization or death.