COVID-19 Vaccines—What Members Need to Know

The COVID-19 vaccine is a critical component in helping us fight the virus. But it will also help keep our communities safe as we return to normal activities with friends, families and coworkers. There’s still so much uncertainty around COVID-19, but significant progress has been made with regards to vaccines.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are currently two vaccines that have received emergency use authorization from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in the prevention of COVID-19. Vaccine coverage currently includes the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine and the Moderna mRNA-1273 vaccine, which have both received emergency use authorization from the FDA. Other vaccines are currently undergoing clinical trials and hundreds are still in development stages. Here’s what we know:

• The new COVID-19 vaccines (Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna mRNA-1273) have received emergency use authorization from the FDA. Vaccines are developed using strict guidance from the FDA and then thoroughly reviewed for safety and effectiveness. The vaccines are tested on individuals of different ages, races, and ethnicities, as well as those with different medical conditions. And the FDA and CDC are continuously monitoring the safety and quality of authorized vaccines.

• The vaccine will be widely available soon. Right now, the vaccine is being distributed in a phased approach. Florida’s Governor, Ron DeSantis, signed an executive order on December 23 allowing people 65 and older, residents of long-term care facilities, health care workers and those considered high risk by a hospital to begin receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. Members who fall into these categories should immediately contact their local health departments or consult their local emergency management office or website to learn how to arrange vaccination or get an appointment.

Getting the Vaccine

Both initial vaccines require two doses, so two separate visits to a healthcare provider and two shots. The process is slightly different than what you may be used to when getting the influenza vaccine. In the case of the COVID-19 vaccine, you will be asked to wait 15-30 minutes after receiving the vaccination to make sure there is no reaction. This is normal and required. Remember the risk of a severe reaction is EXTREMELY low. The first dose will only protect you about 54%, but the real protection rates of approximately 94% occur for most people about two weeks after the second shot.

For the Pfizer vaccine, the two doses are taken three weeks apart, and for the Moderna, a month apart. If you do not return for your second dose, you are not properly safeguarded against COVID-19.

Some potential reactions include soreness and redness at the injection site, headache, nausea or muscle stiffness. These reactions are common with many vaccines, so no cause for worry.

If you have had a serious reaction to prior immunizations or have questions about the COVID-19 vaccine, remember to talk to your healthcare professional.

To learn more, please visit: www.planyourvaccine.com

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COVID-19 Reminders

There is a lot of information circulating around about the COVID-19 vaccine — as well as some misinformation. Below are a few reminders to help you make the most educated decision for you and your family.

The cost of vaccine administration is covered under your health plan. You won’t pay anything to receive the vaccine during the public health emergency period, regardless of whether the vaccine is administered from an in-network or out-of-network provider.

Vaccines are being distributed in phases. Due to limited supplies, rollout varies according to state and federal regulations. Please consult your state health department for their vaccine distribution schedule. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website lists the state health departments.

Watch out for scams. Federal agencies have asked the public to be aware of potentially fraudulent activity as it relates to COVID-19 vaccine distribution. If someone contacts you promising access to the vaccine for a fee, do not share your personal or financial information.

Please continue to take safety precautions to slow the spread of COVID-19. Wear a mask, wash your hands thoroughly and frequently, practice social distancing, and get a flu shot. The vaccine is a powerful tool in the fight against COVID-19, but the basic safety guidelines remain effective and necessary.

Contact your health care provider for more information. If you have questions about the safety and effectiveness of the vaccines, please consult your primary care provider. For help locating an in-network provider near you, use our Find Care tool, accessible through the My Health Toolkit® website or mobile app. You can also visit the CDC website for reliable information.

Although the two currently approved COVID-19 vaccines have been HIGHLY effective in preventing COVID-19 infections, it is still unknown if either or any will prevent transmission of COVID from one person to the next. This too is being studied in ongoing trials. In other words, even if someone is vaccinated, we just do not know if they are exposed to COVID-19 in the future and have no symptoms, if they will be able to transmit the virus to other people. We do know, though, that you do not transmit the virus simply from being vaccinated since there is NOT a live virus in the vaccination. Therefore, after you’ve gotten the vaccine, you still need to take precautions. Continue to wear a mask and social distance.

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Now that Discovery Benefits will be known as WEX, you may notice some changes to your account, such as logos, colors, and handouts. You'll continue to use the same online account, mobile app, and debit card you have today, and will continue to contact the same participant services team.

**What is changing and when?**

In February, the Discovery Benefits website will transition to [www.wexinc.com](http://www.wexinc.com). As part of this transition, beginning on February 26, 2021 you'll access your account at www.wexinc.com. On or after this date, if you visit the Discovery Benefits website, you will be redirected to the WEX website.

**ICUBA members don't have to worry about new website addresses or logins!**

**Why not?** Because it is still super easy to access your account through your home screen on the ICUBA benefits portal. When you click on the Visa card image, you will still go directly to your account!

As always, you can also connect to WEX through ICUBA’s phone line: **866-377-5102, Option 1.**

You can also log into your account through the Discovery Benefits mobile app. Simply, log in with your existing username and password.