

December 11, 2020

Frequently Asked Questions for Residents/Tenants and Families

{Note: What follows are selected Q&A relating to what is currently known about COVID-19 vaccination.}

Why should I get vaccinated?

Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 is one of the best ways to protect yourself and everyone around you, particularly those who are at increased risk for severe illness. Wearing masks and social distancing help reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus or spreading it to others, but these measures are not enough. Vaccines will work with your immune system, so it is ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. Getting these shots will not only protect you from being infected; it will help us take a big step towards ending this pandemic.

How do we know it's safe since it was developed so quickly?

Scientists have worked on coronavirus research for decades starting with the original SARS outbreak and influenza. Scientists only needed to isolate certain things about COVID-19 to begin creating a vaccine because we already knew so much about SARS, MERS, Avian flu, H5N1, etc (all in the coronavirus family). Due to the public health crisis created by the pandemic, many private, government and independent groups came together and cooperated on a vaccine. This scale of cooperation is not typical, and the partnership created resources and information sharing to develop the vaccine faster.

Is the vaccine really safe? What about testing trials?

Vaccine safety is the most important requirement for the vaccine and is assessed in trials by independent experts. A new method was used to develop the vaccine that employs a synthetic form of a genetic molecule called messenger RNA which caused human cells to make a harmless viral protein, which then stimulates the immune system to make antibodies. This will not modify our DNA. This new method of developing a vaccine has been in the works for years, so they didn't start with something totally new. Past research has identified this new approach.

FDA advises a minimum of 3,000 participants to assess safety. The current phase 3 trials have 30,000 to 50,000 participants. The trials have NOT been rushed. The trials evaluating safety and efficacy of these vaccines have proceeded with all the checks and balances as any trial would in non-pandemic times.

This really demonstrates how safety is a top priority for the FDA and the medical community.

When will the COVID-19 vaccination be available for residents?

Sholom is partnering with CVS Health and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as part of a vaccination program to provide COVID-19 vaccinations to Sholom staff and residents. Once a COVID-19 vaccine is authorized by the Federal Drug Administration (FDA), the United States government will make a supply of publicly funded vaccines available for distribution to patients/residents/tenants and health care workers consistent with the priorities for vaccination as established by the federal/state government.

At this time, Sholom does not have any specific dates for COVID-19 vaccination clinics. When we receive notification by CVS Health regarding Sholom's vaccination clinic dates, we will communicate that information to you. There will be no cost for the vaccine, however, if you are insured, your insurance will charge an administration fee for the injection by CVS Health.

Why is it important for long-term care staff and residents to receive the vaccination first?

The average age of residents in long term care facilities is 85 and almost everyone has an underlying health condition, and some have multiple chronic conditions. According to CDC data, the risk of mortality with COVID-19 in this age group is 630 times higher than those 18-29 years old. While many industries can stay open or partially open with safety measures, long term care communities will not be able to return to normal when many are vaccinated.

What do I need to do as a POA to give consent for this vaccination?

Please contact our social services department for more information.

How will we receive the vaccine?

Residents will receive their vaccines through the federal [pharmacy partnership program](#) (PPP). Sholom's pharmacy partner is CVS Health. CVS has a plan to offer multiple on-site clinics to facilitate the two doses needed for this vaccine. Our local county public health office will work to facilitate staff vaccinations. This infrastructure will be helpful in ensuring that long term care residents and staff are among the first to receive the vaccine.

Is there a risk that I can get COVID-19 from the vaccination?

No, there is no risk of getting COVID-19 from the vaccination. This vaccination contains no actual live or killed COVID-19 virus. You may experience some side effects from the vaccine such as a sore arm, mild aches, or fever. This is your immune system responding to the vaccine and is expected. This does not mean you are getting sick with COVID-19. We need the vaccine to trigger this immune response to produce the immunity you need against COVID-19.

What are the side effects of the vaccine? Are there long-term effects?

There may be side-effects from the COVID-19 vaccination such as a sore arm, mild, generalized aches, headache, and fever. These side effects are common and appear to be

short lived. **This does not mean that the vaccine has given you COVID-19;** the side-effects are a result of your body's immune system working to understand and create a response to the virus which is needed for your immunity. The vaccine is causing your body's immune system to react and create antibodies to fight off the virus. **In other words, if you feel some discomfort, then the vaccine is doing its job!**

In some cases, a person may **already** be infected with COVID-19 when they get the vaccine, but are asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic. If they later have symptoms of COVID-19 or test positive for it, it **does not** mean they got COVID-19 from the vaccine.

The long-term effects are still being studied. The first two months show no severe side effects. As with all vaccinations, long-term effects are monitored for up to 10 years.

What if I have a history of severe allergic reactions to food or medication? Should I still receive the vaccine?

Please consult with your physician before receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

What if I already had COVID-19?

Even if you have had COVID-19, it is safe to receive the vaccine and this can add additional protection without causing any harm. If you have had a test that shows you have COVID-19 antibodies, you should still get the vaccine. It is safe and can increase your protection from future COVID-19 infections.

Should / can I still get a flu shot?

It is important you still receive a flu shot. However, it is not recommended to have a flu shot within one month of the COVID-19 vaccine. If you have not already received your flu shot, speak with your doctor about the best plan for receiving flu vaccine and COVID-19 vaccine.

Will I have to pay for it?

No, there will be no cost to you for the vaccine. There is an administration fee for the injection that will be billed to your insurance or the State of Minnesota.

How many shots will I need and when?

The vaccine includes two injections. The second injection will either be given 21- or 28-days after the first injection. The timeframe for the second injection depends upon the manufacturer and what is written in the emergency use authorization. Shalom will make sure you have this information once vaccines are distributed and ready for administration.

When will we be protected after we get the vaccine?

Even when people receive the vaccine, they will not be immediately protected and will need to continue wearing masks, social distancing and practicing frequent hand hygiene.

While no vaccine is 100% effective, some of the vaccines proposed are anticipated to be more than 90% effective. This will greatly reduce your risk of getting sick with COVID-19 and spreading COVID-19 to our residents/tenants, other staff members, or your loved ones.

For more information, visit the CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/about-vaccines/how-they-work.html>

After I have had the second dose of the vaccine and it is 2 weeks after my second shot, do I still have to wear a mask?

Yes. Even though you have received your vaccine, most of the people around you have not. We know the vaccine prevents you from getting sick but you can still get the disease and spread it. It still may be possible to transmit the disease to others, until the vaccine is in widespread use.

Wearing a mask, social distancing, and practicing hand hygiene protects those who have not been vaccinated, especially our residents in long-term care.

How long is the vaccine effective?

We don't know. Because the vaccine is new, the length of immunity is unknown. There are some vaccines that do not require additional shots and there are other vaccines, such as the tetanus vaccine, that require periodic boosters. The vaccine will continue to be studied over time and if additional boosters are needed that information will be released when it is known.

Is it better to get natural immunity for COVID by getting the virus instead of the vaccine?

In many cases, the way to develop natural immunity to a pathogen is to become sick, have our immune systems respond, and then our immune system "remembers" the pathogen to keep us from getting sick again. However, our immune systems cannot always "remember" the pathogen; or, it cannot always fight off the virus. Right now, we don't know if becoming sick with COVID-19 actually causes you to be immune to re-infection with the virus or not. We believe the vaccination does provide immunity to the disease. Additionally, there is no way to predict whether or not someone with COVID-19 will develop severe disease and suffer significant health complications or not; becoming sick is a risk and there is no way to predict the outcome of illness. You will not become sick from the COVID-19 vaccine but you may experience short-lived side effects.

What happens when long-term care residents are vaccinated? Can we begin to reopen our community?

Long term care facilities will not be able to return to normal until a vaccine is administered to most residents and staff. As soon as we start to successfully administer the vaccine in our communities, we hope we can begin to discuss what's next for our community and for long-term care communities across our state. Until that time, please continue your infection prevention and control practices and follow the most current visitation guidance, even after you start vaccinations.