



NORTHWEST PORTLAND AREA  
INDIAN HEALTH BOARD  
*Indian Leadership for Indian Health*

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## Getting the Covid-19 Vaccine

With the Covid-19 vaccine now being distributed and more tribal members being vaccinated, we wanted to answer some common questions about what to expect when its available to you, so you can feel comfortable and prepared.

## Things to Know Before Vaccination

### What are vaccines?

Vaccines are medicines that help “teach” our bodies how to recognize and fight specific diseases. After receiving a Covid-19 vaccine, your body will develop protection against the coronavirus. This is called immunity. Vaccines are one of the most important public health measures ever developed. Because of vaccines, most children in the United States are protected from childhood diseases – saving thousands of lives.

### What vaccines are available for Covid-19?

There are currently two Covid-19 vaccines available, made by the pharmaceutical companies Pfizer and Moderna. Each requires two doses. Depending on which vaccine you receive, the second dose will be given three or four weeks after the first dose.

Both vaccines are about 95% effective against Covid-19 for all races, genders, and ages! It is much better to be vaccinated than to get sick with Covid-19 because the disease can have serious, life-threatening complications, and there is no way to know how it will affect you. And, if you get sick you could spread the disease to your family and loved ones.

### Why do the vaccines require two doses?

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require two doses to achieve their full protection. Research has shown that the vaccines are only about 50% effective after the first shot, but are 95% effective two weeks after the second shot.

Getting both doses is really important to keep you safe.

**PROTECTS ME  
PROTECTS YOU**

## Herd Immunity:

Herd immunity (also called Community Immunity) is when enough of the population is immune to a disease, it cannot easily spread to people who are not immune. Achieving herd immunity is usually done through vaccines, like the polio vaccine. That way people do not have to become sick to acquire immunity. Many scientists, including Dr. Anthony Fauci, believe that around 75% to 85% of the population will need to be vaccinated to achieve herd immunity against Covid-19.

**To learn more about the current vaccines, see the link below:**

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

## **You can vaccinate with confidence.**

These vaccines are very safe. There were no serious side effects in the almost 75,000 people who took part in the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine trials and their safety record continues now that millions of people have been vaccinated. We hope this record of safety makes everyone feel more confident about the vaccines.

Mild side effects, like tiredness, headache, and muscle pain, can happen but they usually go away in a few days. If you have any of these symptoms, don't be alarmed, they mean your body is building protection against the virus! Many people report no side-effects at all, but if you have any concerns, don't hesitate to call your doctor.

## **Who is eligible for the Covid-19 vaccine?**

Anyone who is 16 and older for the Pfizer vaccine and 18 and older for the Moderna vaccine, is eligible – unless they have had a previous history of severe *allergic reactions* to other vaccines, Underlying health conditions, such as diabetes or heart disease do not prevent you from getting the vaccine.

Severe allergic reactions to vaccines are extremely rare. These reactions, also known as anaphylaxis, include restrictions of the airways, difficulty breathing, and a sudden drop in blood pressure and require medical attention. Out of the first 1.9 million doses of the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine given, *only 21 cases of anaphylaxis* were reported and Moderna reports *only 2.5 cases of anaphylaxis* per million doses. If you have had or are concerned you might have a severe reaction, it is important that you talk with your doctor before getting the vaccine.

## **Getting the Vaccine**

### **At the clinic or drive thru.**

When you are scheduled for your vaccine, expect to spend up to an hour, depending on the location. First, you may be asked some questions to make sure it is safe for you to receive the vaccine, including “Are you feeling sick” or “Have you had another vaccine (not for Covid-19) recently?” You will also be told which vaccine you will receive and your clinician can answer any questions you might have about it. Because the supply of vaccines is still limited, you will not be able to request a specific vaccine.

After you are vaccinated, you will be asked to wait for 15 to 30 minutes before leaving. This is required by the CDC and is for your safety. If you are feeling anxious, you can stay longer, of course. Before leaving, you will be given a *CDC Vaccination Record Card* which you must keep and bring when you get your second dose. If you haven't already scheduled an appointment for your second dose, information will be given about doing that, too.

## **After your Vaccine**

### **Keep planning to stay safe.**

The day we can stop wearing masks and hug our family and friends is coming, but until the majority of the population is vaccinated (“herd immunity”), we need to continue wearing masks and socially distancing to keep ourselves, our family, and our communities safe.

After being vaccinated, scientists do not know if you could still be carrying the virus, even though you feel fine. You could also get sick while your body is building its defenses. This means you might unknowingly pass the virus to someone who hasn't received their vaccination, yet. Wearing your mask and social distancing will help prevent that. If you feel ill, stay home and call your clinic.

### **Share the good news!**

Let your family and friends know that you have received the vaccine! Some people may be skeptical or concerned about the vaccine. Hearing or seeing positive stories about getting the vaccine might encourage them to get vaccinated and help stop Covid-19!

By getting vaccinated, you are helping in the fight against the pandemic by keeping yourself, your family, and your community safe. Thank you!