

More Frequently Asked Questions About the COVID Vaccine



Where can I get the vaccine?

This is a difficult question to answer. Vaccine shipments are dependent on supply and the current situation is fluid for the next 6-8 weeks which means that the health department's community partners (e.g., pharmacies, clinics, doctor's offices) will not be offering the vaccine anytime soon. The health departments and hospitals do have vaccine and are delivering the second doses to those people who have had one dose. Some doctor's offices **may** have a limited supply, if they are associated with a hospital group (e.g., HCA, VCU or Bon Secours).

One current option for those in the Richmond and Henrico area is to register an interest in receiving the vaccine when available at rchd.com; click on [How Do I Get a Vaccine?](#) scroll down and fill out the appropriate form. Other counties have their own form available online to register for the vaccine.

Our advice at this point: Be patient! Register with your local health district or primary doctor. Follow guidance on mask wearing, social distancing and hand washing.

Do I have to wear a mask after I receive both doses of the vaccine?

Yes. There are five reasons that masks are here to stay:

1. No vaccine is 100% effective.
 - While about 95% effective, vaccine efficacy is affected by a variety of factors. The genetic material used in the mRNA vaccines is very fragile so any variation in the storage and transportation guidelines can influence how well the vaccines work.
2. Vaccines don't provide immediate protection.
 - No vaccine is effective right away. COVID vaccines take even longer to work because they require two doses. Full protection will not arrive until 5-6 weeks after the first dose.
3. COVID-19 vaccines may not prevent you from spreading the virus.
 - Researchers need more time to figure out if the vaccine prevents transmission.
4. Masks protect people with compromised immune systems.
 - Research on other vaccines has shown that immunocompromised people may not mount as great an immune response as healthy people. It is unknown how people with cancer will respond to the vaccines because they were excluded from the clinical trials.
5. Masks protect against any strain/genetic mutation of the coronavirus (and other viruses).
 - New genetic variants of the coronavirus appear to be 50% more infectious. Scientists will have to determine how effective the current vaccines are against them.

We are all COVID weary, but the best approach to ending the pandemic is to get vaccinated, wear masks, wash your hands frequently and physically distance.

Sources: vdh.virginia.org and khn.org (Kaiser Health Network)