

Focus Area 1: The COVID-19 vaccine is available and safe

- There are currently two vaccines approved for use in the United States. They are the Pfizer vaccine and the Moderna vaccine.
- **The Central Shenandoah Health District is currently working on vaccinating those in the Phase 1a vaccine prioritization group.** This includes healthcare workers and long term care residents and staff. It is crucial that all of our healthcare workers get vaccinated as soon as they are able, especially as we are currently experiencing substantial community transmission of COVID-19 in our region. We need to protect our healthcare capacity and the lives of those individuals who have been on the frontlines of the pandemic.
- Information about Phase 1b and Phase 1c was announced on Wednesday, January 6th. There will be overlap between phases as we work to complete the majority of one group and begin efforts on the next. **CSHD will continue primary focus on Phase 1a groups until the end of January, but we will also begin preparations for and work with Phase 1b groups. We'll be beginning efforts for those age 75 and above beginning the week of January 18 as we continue to work on the Phase 1a healthcare worker group.**
 - The focus of these groups is to preserve essential functions of society as well as reduce the burden of disease and death due to COVID-19 among groups at high risk for severe disease (such as older citizens).
 - As availability of the vaccine increases, Virginia will move to the other phases. An exact timeline is not yet known.
 - Virginians who do not fall into priority categories will be offered the COVID-19 vaccine when it is more widely available. Once the vaccine is rolled out to the general public, distribution will be similar to the flu vaccine. People will be able to get the vaccine from a local pharmacy, primary care physician, Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC)/free clinic, local health department or other clinic that is participating as a COVID-19 Vaccination Program Provider.
- Both vaccines are safe and effective. Like all vaccines, COVID-19 vaccines have gone through a careful trial process with several phases.
 - For every vaccine in the United States (including COVID-19), trials start with Phases 1 and 2, when small groups of people are vaccinated and then monitored. In Phase 3, tens of thousands of people are vaccinated to be sure the vaccine is both safe and effective for all types of people. After a vaccine is authorized or approved, it goes through a Phase 4 trial, where long-term effects are studied. These trials, which include people at high risk for COVID-19, will help identify any common side effects or other safety concerns and will help clarify how long protection lasts after vaccination.

Focus Area 2: When it is available to you, you should get the vaccine.

- **The COVID-19 vaccine will be offered to everyone who is recommended to get the vaccine at no cost.**
- The two vaccines currently available require 2 doses, 3-4 weeks apart. It is very important to get both doses.
 - The first dose helps jump-start cells to make antibodies. This offers you some protection.
 - The second dose contains the same formula as the first dose and gives the immune system an additional boost to increase the effectiveness of the vaccine. By getting the second dose, the body gets a boost to make more antibodies, which helps to increase the effectiveness of the vaccine even more.
- The COVID-19 vaccine will greatly reduce your chances of getting COVID-19 and will ensure that if you do get the virus, you will have only mild symptoms or none at all. In trials, the Pfizer vaccine was 95% effective at preventing symptomatic COVID-19 infection. In trials, the Moderna vaccine was 94.1% effective at preventing symptomatic COVID-19 infection.
- The vaccine will not give you COVID-19. The vaccine is not made from the live virus. The vaccine just teaches your body to build a protein that fights the virus.

- **If you have had COVID-19, regardless of history (symptomatic or asymptomatic), you should get the vaccine.** Patients should be out of the isolation period and out of the active stage of infection when they get vaccinated.
- You may experience mild side effects after getting vaccinated. Those who have received the vaccine have reported arm pain at the injection site, tiredness, headache or other body aches, and some had a fever for a few days. This short term discomfort is the effect of your body developing immunity, and is normal.
- **Remember that the best COVID-19 vaccine option for you is the first one that you have access to.** If you have any questions or concerns about a specific COVID-19 vaccine, be sure to talk with your doctor.

Focus Area 3: While you wait and after you are vaccinated, there are things you can do to protect your family and community.

- **We still need to use all of the “tools” in the COVID-19 prevention toolbox.** While experts learn more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide under real-life conditions, it will be important for everyone to continue using all the tools available to us to help stop this pandemic, like covering your mouth and nose with a mask, washing hands often, and staying at least 6 feet away from others.
- **Until we get enough persons in the community vaccinated to stop the spread of the virus, it is extremely important that we overlap our vaccine efforts with our other mitigation strategies** (the 3 W’s: wash hands, wear a mask, watch your distance).

Actions the public can take:

While you are waiting for your turn to get the COVID-19 vaccine, here is what you can do:

- Take this brief quiz to find out which vaccination phase you are eligible to receive the vaccine in: <https://vdh.jebbit.com/amkwk6m1?L=Owned+Web&JC=Vaccine>
- Please use this interactive map to find out which COVID-19 vaccine phase your Health District is in: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/covid-19-vaccine/phase-by-health-district/>. We do not have an exact timeline yet of when Virginia will move to the next phase.
- For general questions regarding COVID-19 or COVID-19 vaccines, please email cshdinfo@vdh.virginia.gov
- For employer/organization requests to obtain COVID-19 vaccine, please email cshd_esf8@vdh.virginia.gov
- Subscribe to the [Central Shenandoah Health District COVID-19 Newsletter](#)
- Follow the [Central Shenandoah Health District](#) on Facebook
- Keep an eye on the VDH website and visit VDH’s FAQs (www.vdh.virginia.gov/covid-19-faq/) to stay up to date on COVID-19 vaccine information.

Helpful resources:

- VDH COVID-19 Vaccine Website: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/covid-19-vaccine/#resources19>
- VDH COVID-19 Vaccine FAQs: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/covid-19-faq/>
- Information about Phase 1a: https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/191/2020/12/VDMAC_Revised-Vaccine-Allocation-Prioritization-12.4.2020.pdf
- Information about Phase 1b: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/191/2021/01/Phase-1b-In-Depth.pdf>