COVID-19 Vaccine

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Q. Who is eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine?

A. The federal government is determining priority groups who will receive the first available vaccine, and allocation and distribution will be through state and county public health departments who will determine the number of doses available to priority groups within the state. The UnityPoint Health system is receiving its first allocation of COVID-19 vaccine doses this week. (December 14, 2020). As requested by the CDC, the first doses are prioritized for health care workers with the highest risk of exposure to COVID-19. The intent is to keep as many frontline health care workers as possible healthy and available to care for patients. GCMH has been advised by Grundy County Public Health that the hospital will receive its first allocation the week of December 21, with new vaccine allocation arriving in the county weekly as more becomes available.

Q. How long will it take to provide vaccine to all of Iowa's eligible health care workers?

A. It's unknown how long the first phase of vaccine distribution to frontline health care workers will last. The next phase will expand vaccine availability to other essential workers and then high-risk patients. The length of the process depends on the availability of vaccine doses. For example, in Grundy County, there are 606 health care workers eligible to be vaccinated, including staff of long-term care facilities.

Q. When will a vaccine be more widely available?

A. Vaccine supplies will increase over time. Depending on which risk group an individual is assigned, members of the public may be eligible for vaccines in the first months of 2021. The hospital and UnityPoint Health system want to be able to get the vac¬cine to our patients as quickly as possible. As production of the vaccines increases to the point of being widely available, we will be communicating with our patients and our communities.

Q. What explains the quick development of the COVID-19 vaccine, when other vaccines have taken much longer to develop?

A. Vaccines are perhaps the best hope for ending the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the rapid development and approval of these vaccines may make you hesitant about safety or effectiveness. The emergency situation of a pan¬demic warranted an emergency response by the world's medical and scientific community, but this does not mean that safety protocols were skipped or that testing was not adequate. International collaboration of resources has oc¬curred due to the widespread devastation of this pandemic. Many scientists and industries are focused on the same thing – and governments are relieving pharmaceutical companies from financial risk by providing the support to both develop and manufacture a vaccine product simulta¬neously. Prior experience with other coronavirus vaccines for illnesses such as SARS and MERS which were caused by similar viruses, helped make today's advanced timetable for the COVID-19 vaccine possible due to the research and development made with the earlier viruses. In addition to the safety review by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the nation's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has convened a panel of vaccine safety experts to independently evaluate the safety data from the clinical trials.

Q. What is herd immunity?

A. Herd immunity is a term used to describe when enough people have protection—either from previous infection or vaccina¬tion—that it is unlikely a virus or bacteria can spread and cause disease. As a result, everyone within the community is protected even if some people don't have any protection themselves. *Information obtained from: CDC.gov*

Grundy County Memorial Hospital
UnityPoint Health

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Q. When will the general public obtain herd immunity?

A. Experts do not know what percentage of people would need to get vaccinated in order to achieve herd immunity to COVID-19. The percentage of people who need to have protection in order to achieve herd immunity varies by disease.
Information obtained from: CDC.gov

Q. What are the priority levels in which the public will be vaccinated?

A. When a COVID-19 vaccine is authorized by FDA and recommended by ACIP, CDC guidelines state that: vaccination in the initial phase of the COVID-19 vaccination program (Phase 1a) should be offered to both 1) health care personnel and 2) residents of long-term care facilities.
Before making an official recommendation, ACIP considered four groups to possibly recommend for early COVID-19 vaccination if supply is limited:

- Health care personnel
- Workers in essential and critical industries
- People at high risk for severe COVID-19 illness due to underlying medical conditions
- People 65 years and older

Information obtained from: CDC.gov

Q. If I have already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine when it's offered to me?

A. **Yes.** There is not enough information currently available to say if or for how long after infection someone is protected from getting COVID-19 again; this is called natural immunity. Early evidence suggests natural immunity from COVID-19 may not last very long, but more studies are needed to better understand this. Per CDC guidance, UnityPoint Health is **advising those who have tested positive for the virus within the past 90 days** to voluntarily wait to receive the vaccine until approximately 90 days following a COVID-19 diagnosis. This is to facilitate vaccination of those who are still susceptible to infection, as current evidence shows that risk for reinfection within 90 days is very low. In addition, people **should not** get the vaccine while quarantining after exposure to COVID-19 or if they have any COVID-19 symptoms.

Q. Do I need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others if I have received 2 doses of the vaccine?

A. **Yes.** While two doses of the vaccine, 21–28 days apart, are necessary for people to be considered protected by the vaccine, experts are still learning about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide under real-life conditions. So for now 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. Experts need to understand more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide before deciding to change recommendations on steps everyone should take to slow the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. Other factors, including how many people get vaccinated and how the virus is spreading in communities, will also affect this decision.