COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ
for Seattle Cancer Care Alliance Staff

Click on the topic below to jump to questions that relate to it:

Type of vaccine
Prioritization
Logistics
Optional or mandatory
Safety and side effects
Employee Health and HR
SCCA patients and the vaccine
More information
Type of vaccine

What vaccine are we getting and how many doses?
We will be getting the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine that is administered in two doses, 21 days apart. SCCA will receive 975 doses of the approximately 62,500 doses that will be delivered initially to the state of Washington soon after the FDA approves the vaccine for emergency use authorization.

The Washington State Department of Health is charged with distributing the initial vaccine to 26 sites throughout the state. Additional doses and sites will become available throughout the month of December and into 2021. We will be allocated additional doses to ensure that everyone who receives their first dose will also receive a second dose.

Will other vaccines become available?
The Moderna vaccine will be evaluated by the FDA for emergency use authorization for its two-dose vaccine on December 17. We also expect additional vaccine manufacturers to apply for approval in early 2021.

If Moderna has a two-dose vaccine available, can staff mix the doses and get a Pfizer vaccine first followed by the Moderna vaccine?
No, you must receive your second dose from the same manufacturer. Pfizer’s vaccine is given in two-doses, 21 days apart, while Moderna’s vaccine is given in two doses, 28 days apart.

Can I choose which vaccine I want to receive?
We encourage everyone to take the vaccine that is available at the time you are eligible.

Prioritization

Is SCCA developing a priority list for receiving vaccinations?
Yes. Our priority list is based on the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention’s Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommendations. The recommendation is that healthcare workers who are most at risk for becoming infected, such as those performing and assisting with aerosol generating procedures, COVID-19 testing staff, screeners and safety officers, be offered the first available doses of the vaccine.

SCCA has created a multi-disciplinary Vaccine Task Force to work through all the necessary logistics, including identifying those healthcare workers who are at highest risk so they can be prioritized to receive the vaccine at the earliest possible time. The first group of SCCA staff members eligible based on prioritization are staff in the following areas—this includes staff at all SCCA sites:
Group 1
The first group of eligible SCCA staff includes:

- Healthcare workers who perform aerosol generating procedures (AGP). Examples include but are not limited to:
  - Procedure suite
  - PFT
  - Oral Medicine
  - Head & Neck
  - Nuclear Med (VQ scan)
- Rapid response team (RRT), including those that have to in the room for an AGP. Examples include, but are not limited to:
  - SLU: RRT including staff from Procedure Suite, Infusion, and APP
  - Community sites: Defined by managers at each site
- Selected staff working on inpatient units where COVID-19 patients are cared for, including providers who work on the inpatient unit and must enter COVID-19 units, Fred Hutch COVID clinical research staff
- Healthcare workers in Triage COVID-19 testing, such as Triage/Command Center staff, BMT/IMTX Triage staff
- Screeners and safety officers/security from SLU and community sites
- Staff administering the COVID-19 vaccine: Employee Health and Safety nurses, volunteers and check-in staff

In accordance with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Washington State Department of Health, this first group will be quickly followed by SCCA staff in the following areas:

Group 2
The second group of eligible SCCA staff includes:

- Employees in direct patient care and housekeeping. Examples include, but are not limited to:
  - Nurses
  - MA/LPNs
  - Providers
  - Front desk staff
  - Supportive Services staff with patient facing roles, such as Nutrition, Social Work, Pharmacy, Physical Therapy, Acupuncture and Spiritual Health
  - Team coordinators with patient facing roles
- Researcher coordinators with patient facing roles
- Interpreters
- Bistro staff
- Transportation/valet staff
- ABS contractors

This group may be further prioritized based on additional factors such as percentage of time spent on patient facing activities.

- Laboratory staff who handle COVID-19 samples; Alliance Lab staff
- Sterilization Services, those that handle soiled instruments and medical devices. Examples include, but are not limited to Sterilization Services, Medical equipment staff, UWSI
- Staff that many not have patient facing roles but are required to be onsite in clinical buildings. Employees that are required to be onsite and spend any portion of their time within a clinical setting will be captured in this group. Examples include, but not limited to:
  - Team coordinators located in the clinic, non-patient facing
  - Research coordinators non-patient facing
  - SCCA Facilities/engineering, FH engineers that work in clinic
  - EH&S/Safety
  - Pharmacy (non-patient facing)
  - IT
  - Materials Management
  - SCCA House, Pete Gross House, Shine
  - 7th floor labs
  - Financial counselors

This group may be further prioritized based on additional factors such as percentage of time spent on patient facing activities.

- All other laboratory employees that handle clinical samples. Examples include but are not limited to Blane lab

SCCA staff who do not fall into the above categories will still have an opportunity for vaccination in the coming months. Additional groups will be outlined in detail as the vaccination process continues.

**Will everyone on my team get vaccinated around the same time?**

Because it is critical that SCCA has sufficient workforce to care for patients, only a few team members from the same unit will be vaccinated at the same time.
If I work at UWMC and SCCA, where will I get vaccinated?
If you work at both locations, you can choose where to get your vaccine, but you must get doses 1 and 2 administered at the same organization and submit a declination for the institution from which you are not receiving the vaccine.

How will people be sure to get their second dose? Is timing essential?
Employee Health will schedule your second vaccine when you check in for your first vaccine. You will also receive an email reminder. It is critical that everyone receive their second dose and get it at the time that it is scheduled.

If I am a healthcare worker and am in a medically high-risk group, what should I do when I am offered the vaccine?
Many people in a high-risk group with co-morbidities are likely to benefit from the vaccine and are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated. If you have questions, you should contact your primary care provider to determine the best course of action.

If I am at high-risk for COVID-19, will my family be prioritized to receive the vaccine when I do?
We are following CDC guidelines and at this time will focus on our staff. Your family members should check with their primary care physician to find out when they will offer vaccines.

Logistics

Where do I go to get my vaccine?
If you are at South Lake Union, Employee Health and Safety will email you instructions about where to check-in for your vaccine. If you are at a community site, Employee Health will email you information and your manager will validate where to go to check in for your vaccine.

How will staff be notified when they can receive the vaccine?
Employee Health is developing a mandatory questionnaire that staff in the first two priority groups will receive via email. Detailed instructions on vaccination appointments will follow. We will be using technology as much as possible and working to develop ways to manage notification, registration and scheduling. Staff will need to do everything they can to make their scheduled appointment, as there is limited flexibility with timing and if you are unable to make your appointment, we run the risk of wasting a dose of vaccine.
What can I expect once I schedule my appointment?
You will be scheduled for a 30-minute window to receive your vaccination. This will include prep time, time to fill out consent paperwork, vaccination time, and a required 15-minute observation period following your vaccination. Because we are still physical distancing, it is important that you arrive for your vaccine as close to the time of your appointment as possible. You should bring your employee badge, and you will be asked to verify the information you had previously filled out online. We will give you a fact sheet and information on side effects.

What if I can’t make my appointment?
Please do everything you can to make your scheduled appointment. If you are unable to make your appointment, we run the risk of wasting a dose of vaccine. In addition, there is limited flexibility with timing. If you work at South Lake Union and are unable to make you appointment, please contact Employee Health at (206) 606-2500 or employeehealth@seattlecca.org as soon as possible so that we can offer the vaccine to someone else during your time slot. If you work at a community site, please contact your clinic manager if you cannot make your appointment. Your vaccine will be rescheduled as soon as we can get you into the schedule.

When will I get my second shot?
Employee Health will schedule your second vaccine when you check in for your first vaccine. You will also receive an email reminder. It is critical that everyone receive their second dose and get it at the time that it is scheduled.

Optional or mandatory

Will employees be required to be vaccinated?
When staff in the first two priority groups receive an email questionnaire alerting them to their vaccination opportunity, each person must respond with their level of interest. While vaccination is not mandatory, all staff are strongly encouraged to get the vaccine. Getting vaccinated will help maintain a safe work environment, allow our healthcare workers to continue to safely care for patients during this surge, and decrease your risk of getting COVID-19 or potentially exposing others to it, including your family, friends and the community. Getting a vaccine will help us end this pandemic.

While declination is an option, our goal is 100% compliance with this COVID-19 prevention campaign as it is with the influenza prevention program. Staff can choose to schedule, postpone or decline. Choosing to decline or postpone will not prevent staff members from scheduling in the future. If a staff member changes their mind, we would be happy to schedule them for a vaccination.
What if I decline the vaccine and then change my mind?
If you decline a vaccine and then at a later date decide you would like it, you will be able to schedule based on the availability of vaccines. More information on this process will be shared soon.

Safety and side effects

What are the side effects of the vaccine?
Vaccine side effects are variable. Some individuals participating in the trials have reported no side effects, others have reported soreness and inflammation at the site of the injection, fever, fatigue, headache, or muscle aches.

Two people in the UK with a history of significant allergic reactions recently had an anaphylactic reaction to the Pfizer vaccine—the vaccine that SCCA is offering. Because of this, UK health authorities issued a warning that people with a significant history of allergic reactions to a vaccine, medicine, or food should not get the Pfizer vaccine. In light of this discovery and until we know more, SCCA advises that if you have a history of anaphylaxis or carry an adrenaline autoinjector (Epi-pen), you should not get the Pfizer vaccine.

What if I have side effects after I get the vaccine?
You will be monitored for immediate side effects for 15 minutes after you get the vaccine. Some people may have symptoms that are like COVID-19 but are not actual infection. Please refer to the Post COVID-19 Vaccination Signs and Symptoms – Return to Work Guidance posted on the COVID-19 Resources page and provider page for next steps. See HR section below for information on time tracking if you are unable to work as a result of injection site reaction or other side effects.

What if I have an adverse reaction to the vaccine that is more serious than the side effects?
If you have an adverse reaction, such as swelling of the face, mouth, or difficulty swallowing or breathing, you should call 911 immediately.

Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccine?
No. This is not a live vaccine and you cannot get COVID-19. Some of the vaccine side effects are very similar to symptoms of COVID-19, but they should be mild.

Can I get vaccinated if I'm experiencing COVID symptoms?
If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, please reschedule your vaccination. Stay home from work and take the COVID-19 symptom survey.
What if I am pregnant or breast-feeding? Can I still get the vaccine?
None of the clinical trials for the COVID-19 vaccine included pregnant or breast-feeding women. If you are pregnant or lactating, please talk to your healthcare provider about your personal health situation and the vaccine.

I understand that getting the vaccine doesn't prevent you from being an asymptomatic vector of transmission. Is that true?
Data that is currently available from the clinical trials show that the vaccine is effective in preventing infection to the recipient; however, we do not yet know whether the vaccine is effective in preventing transmission of COVID-19. Until we learn more about the impact of vaccination on the transmission of COVID-19 and have a large enough portion of our community that is vaccinated, it is critical to continue following infection prevention practices, including the three W’s: wear a mask, watch your distance, wash your hands.

Is my family at risk if I get the vaccine? Will I shed virus from the vaccine?
As this is not a live virus vaccine, there is no risk of shedding virus from the vaccine and no risk to your family and others around you.

Once I am vaccinated, do I still need to mask and physical distance?
Yes, vaccinated individuals will need to continue to follow our infection prevention practices, including masking and physical distancing. It is important for all of us to continue to practice these measures when at work and out in the community until we learn more about the impact of vaccination on the transmission of COVID-19 and have a large enough portion of our community that is vaccinated.

HR and sick time

Should I stay home from work if I get side effects?

How do I track my time if I have vaccine side effects?
If you have a reaction during the 15-minute observation time and need to be off work for a period of time, track your time off in Kronos and select the COVID-19 Quarantine pay code. If you have side effects that require you to take a COVID-19 test, use the COVID-19 Quarantine pay code until you receive test results.

Please note: Employees are responsible for notifying their managers of their injection reaction. Employees are expected to use the appropriate protocols to request time off and keep their manager updated on their return to work status.
What if I’ve used all my sick leave, but get sick later and need more sick time?
If you have used all of your sick time, you will be able to incur a negative sick balance of up to a maximum of 14 days. Per-diem employees are limited to their accrued sick time balance. This is a short-term solution designed to help staff through the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic as part of SCCA’s commitment to the health and wellbeing of its employees.

Please note: Once an eligible employee has used 14-days of negative sick leave, the employee will need to use other accrued paid time or unpaid time off until they accrue more sick time.

Will the fact that I received a vaccine go into my medical records?
Employee Health will document that you received a vaccination just as they do with flu vaccines. If you wish to share this information with your healthcare provider, you should do that. We will provide you with proof-of-vaccination documentation.

Will there be a cost for employees to get the vaccine?
No, vaccines will be free to all employees.

Who do I contact for other vaccine-related questions?
We have created an email address that staff can use to ask general questions about the vaccine and the SCCA vaccine process: COVID19vaccine@seattlecca.org. If your question is related to your personal health and the COVID vaccine, please reach out to your healthcare provider; the email response team cannot provide medical advice.

SCCA patients and the vaccine

Is there a plan to communicate with patients about the vaccine?
SCCA posted information about the vaccine on the SCCA COVID-19 website and encourages you to use the COVID-19 vaccine talking with patients that are posted on the COVID-19 Resources page and COVID-19 Provider page. SCCA emailed patients in December 2020 with an update on the steps we’re taking to protect to them. It included the following language about the vaccine:

“As you may be aware, COVID-19 vaccines are anticipated to be approved for use in the United States in the coming weeks. SCCA is working with local, state and national health care officials regarding vaccine distribution. Eligibility for the vaccine will be guided by the Washington State Department of Health, which has established distribution phases. The first people eligible to receive vaccines are health care workers and those living in long-term care facilities. Vaccine eligibility for cancer patients and caregivers is being determined, and your care team will share more information with you as it becomes available. In the meantime, we continue to offer all SCCA patients and visitors a flu vaccine at patient appointments.
Receiving the vaccine is an important way to protect yourself and others from the flu”.
Is it true that there is no data yet on administering the vaccine to staff who are immunocompromised patients?
The vaccine trials thus far did not include many high-risk populations, such as patients with hematologic malignancies and those who were receiving chemotherapy or immunosuppressive medications. We expect that many of these populations may not be included in early ACIP/CDC recommendations, as studies involving higher-risk groups are generally done after the pivotal phase 3 trials.

SCCA and Fred Hutch hope to have some trials available in the next few months that target some cancer populations. We will monitor these studies closely and update staff and patients when we have more information.

More information

How do I find more information on the COVID Vaccine?
You can find other vaccine-related documents on the COVID-19 Resources page and COVID-19 Provider page. For other vaccine related questions, visit the CDC’s COVID-19 vaccine website. Please contact your healthcare provider for questions related to your personal health and the COVID vaccine. If your questions aren’t answered within these resources, contact the following: employeehelath@seattlecca.org for scheduling and logistics; covid19vaccine@seattlecca.org for general COVID questions.

References: University of Washington staff Q&A; CDC COVID webpages