

# COVID-19 Vaccination Guidelines



BlueShield  
of Northeastern New York

## Introduction

The FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines are safe, effective, and the best tool to contain the pandemic.

We strongly recommend all members receive the vaccine when it is available to them, with rare exceptions. We will continue to support efforts to ensure the proper distribution of the vaccine, with special focus on communities disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

This guideline will be updated as new information becomes available.

## Medically Necessary Guidelines

COVID-19 vaccines that were granted Emergency Use Authorization and/or FDA approval for the dosage volume and schedule requirements and that meet current published FDA requirements are **medically necessary** for the following members:

- Members that meet vaccine-specific age requirement (age  $\geq$  16 years for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine and age  $\geq$  18 years for the Moderna or J&J/Janssen vaccine) and who are part of an identified vaccine-eligible population in their state of residence at the time of vaccination
- Members that received a COVID-19 vaccine and require an additional dose or doses (including completion of the primary series and/or subsequent boosters)
- Members that are currently pregnant or lactating and breast feeding
- Members that are immunocompromised
- Members that had a documented symptomatic COVID-19 infection and have recovered (no symptoms) from their infection
- Members that had a documented symptomatic COVID-19 infection and received monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma as part of COVID-19 treatment. They must wait at least 90 days from such treatment before receiving the COVID-19 vaccine
- Members that had a documented positive test for SARS-CoV-2 RNA but had no symptoms and remained asymptomatic for the following 10 days
- Members with an acute (non-COVID-19) illness should defer vaccination with a COVID-19 vaccine until they have recovered from their acute illness

- Members with a history of allergies should take the following information into account:
  - A member who has a history of allergic reactions to oral medications, food, pet, insect, venom, environmental, latex, etc. must be observed for 30 minutes post vaccination if the member has a history of anaphylaxis in the past
  - A member with a history of any immediate allergic reaction to vaccines or injectable therapies may consider deferral of vaccination and/or referral to an allergist-immunologist for evaluation and advice regarding receipt of the vaccine. If the COVID-19 vaccine is administered, the member must be observed for 30 minutes post vaccination
  - A member with a history of a severe allergic reaction to the initial dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine should **not** receive a second dose of the same vaccine product, and this is considered **not medically necessary**

## Additional information

If members have additional questions regarding vaccination, they should discuss this with their provider.

COVID-19 vaccines must be administered by a provider or program registered and/or certified by their state licensing agency.

Women who are scheduled for a screening mammography should, if possible and when it does not unduly delay care, consider scheduling screening exams prior to the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccination or 4-6 weeks following the second dose of a COVID-19 vaccination. The Moderna vaccine has been shown in about 10-15% of cases to cause some swelling in the axillary (armpit) lymph nodes on the same side as the vaccine injection. This is expected and indicates the body's immune response to the vaccine. However, it may complicate interpretation of the mammogram. It's not clear if other vaccines cause this reaction, but at this time, this suggestion should apply to all COVID-19 vaccines.

If a subsequent vaccine dose is required per FDA documentation, members should be given an appointment for a follow-up vaccination at the time of the initial vaccination.

Members who receive a COVID-19 vaccination will receive information regarding expected usual side effects at the time of vaccination. Members will also receive information regarding the CDC's smartphone application [v-safe](#), a post-vaccination health checker. It allows members to report any side effects to the CDC and reminds them if a second vaccine dose is needed. Members can also report any side effects to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). This is a national program managed by the CDC and the FDA. A report can be submitted online at [vaers.hhs.gov/index](https://vaers.hhs.gov/index) or by contacting VAERS directly at [info@VAERS.org](mailto:info@VAERS.org) or 1-800-822-7967.

Please review the resources on the following page for more information.

## Resources

[CDC Clinical Guidance](#)

[CDC Vaccine Safety](#)

[CDC General Best Practice Guidelines](#)

[New York State COVID-19 Vaccine Information](#)

[Society of Breast Imaging – COVID-19 Vaccine Information](#)