

DIAKON SENIOR LIVING SERVICES



RESIDENT / FAMILY Q & A

Questions & Answers about COVID-19 vaccinations

Q. Is Diakon participating in the national effort to vaccinate residents and staff members of its senior living communities?

A. Yes. Diakon wholeheartedly supports vaccination of both residents and staff members of our senior living communities. Approximately 40 percent of deaths across the U.S. during the COVID-19 pandemic have occurred in nursing homes.

We believe each resident and dedicated staff member is one more reason we support vaccinations.

Our mission affirms that each person is a unique gift of God. Therefore, we must take every effort to protect each resident and the caregivers who serve them daily.

In fact, each of our residents is one more reason we support vaccinations and will participate in this national effort to ease and eventually eradicate the pandemic. Our mission affirms that each person is a unique gift of God. Therefore, we must take every effort to protect each resident and the caregivers who serve them daily.

Q. Which vaccine will you be giving?

A. Senior living communities receive allocations of vaccine based on the governmental effort to distribute it. We have been allocated the Pfizer vaccine. We are working with CVS/Omnicare, which will be providing the vaccines and administering the vaccination clinics.

Q. When will the vaccinations be given?

A. Because each Diakon senior living community has a different schedule for vaccinations, that information, including location and dates, will be provided to you separately.



www.DiakonSeniorLiving.org



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Q. We are concerned the development of the virus has been rushed.

A. While development occurred quickly, international resources were quickly put in place against the pandemic because of its impact on lives and economies. Moreover, new technologies to develop vaccines not available in the past were employed (see the next question for details).

HERE ARE KEY POINTS ABOUT VACCINE DEVELOPMENT:

- A vaccine candidate must meet intense safety criteria. By the time a vaccine has been approved for use after Phase 3 trials, it has been tested in tens of thousands of people.
- Even after that, the vaccine is monitored for side effects and safety.
- Independent panels review how safe and effective a vaccine is. The people on these panels are reviewed to make sure they have no conflict of interest.
- The COVID-19 trials have had 10 times the number of typical trial participants. Test participants represented people of varying ages, races and ethnicities, as well as those with underlying medical conditions.
- Typical federal review practices were used throughout the trials.

Q. This is a new type of vaccine, isn't it?

A. Yes. Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines use a newer technology for vaccines, but that approach has been used successfully in cancer treatments.

Essentially, this type of vaccines instruct our cells to create a harmless protein. That protein cannot create a virus or an infection.

In other words, the vaccines cannot give you COVID-19 disease!

The result is that we build antibodies to the protein. Those antibodies “remember” how to fight the virus should we become infected.

Q. Are the vaccines effective?

A. Yes. Trials show the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines to be 94% to 95% effective, the most effective vaccines ever.

Q. But aren't there side effects?

A. Yes, but not all people experience side effects—or in the same way.

Most important, side effects indicate your body is developing immunity! You are preparing yourself to fight the virus, should you become infected. This is a good thing!

Ever have a flu vaccination with a family member and one of you had no reaction while the other person had a sore arm? Data show that is the case with the COVID-19 vaccines as well.

These are the most prevalent side effects:

- *Headache*
- *Fatigue*
- *Chills or fever*
- *Muscle pain*
- *Injection-site pain*

Most side effects will tend to diminish in 24 hours or less. Some people do report more intense side effects after the second injection. Again, however, they tend to diminish after a day or two. Please consult your primary care physician for instructions on mitigating these effects.

Even if you have side effects after the first injection, it is critical you receive the second injection so that the vaccine is fully effective.

There have been a few reports of allergic reactions by those who previously had similar reactions; we are prepared for these potential side effects.

Q. Our loved one tested positive for the virus. Will he or she still need to be vaccinated?

A. Absolutely. However, it is important that the person who was positive be considered recovered or beyond the recommended quarantine period.

Data show it is safe to receive the vaccine in that case. In fact, the injection should increase your loved one's protection from the virus.

Residents who have active cases of COVID-19 at the time of the vaccination clinic should not receive the vaccine at that time. Following your loved one's recovery—that is, the person is outside the required quarantine period—the care team will discuss vaccination options with you. If your loved one is discharged following the first vaccination and has not received the second, please discuss the situation with your senior living community's executive director or your primary care physician.

Q. How often will this vaccination need to be given?

A. No one yet knows. Some studies indicate annual injections may be required, similar to current influenza vaccinations. We will know this information later.

Q. Will my family member be immediately protected following vaccination?

A. No. The vaccines do not immediately provide protection. Everyone will need to continue taking precautions, including wearing a mask, physical-distancing and continued hand sanitation.

Others may not have been vaccinated. While the vaccine should prevent COVID-19 disease in the person vaccinated, that person might still be able to transmit the virus to others.

It will take time for the U.S. to develop something like herd immunity. The faster that immunity occurs—hence the importance of the vaccinations—the more quickly everyone can return to a life we once called normal.

And regular visits with your loved one can resume.

Q. We are concerned about the cost of the vaccination.

A. There is no cost to you or your loved one to receive the vaccination.

Q. We have religious beliefs against vaccination.

A. Diakon recognizes that some people have a religious objection to the vaccine. We fully respect those beliefs, yet we hope everyone recognizes the importance of this vaccination, especially in relation to the health of others, and will choose to receive it.

We will, however, treat each request for exception to our vaccination policy on an individual basis.

Q. We have additional questions. To whom should we speak?

A. Please speak with the executive director of your campus. If he or she cannot answer your question, the staff person will obtain the information you need.

Q. Are you certain this is the best way to proceed?

A. Yes.

As several nationally recognized experts have said, vaccination side effects for most people are never worse than the effects of COVID-19 disease.

This disease, as you know, can be particularly devastating on older adults, such as your loved one.

As of early December, more than 300,000 U.S. citizens have died as a result of the pandemic. We do not want that number to climb any higher. The vaccines represent our best hope for ending this worldwide health crisis.

Our full statement on vaccinations can be found on the Diakon website at www.diakon.org/COVID-19-vaccines.