**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

about the COVID-19 vaccines

**Is the vaccine safe?**
The two leading COVID-19 vaccine trials from Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna included tens of thousands of participants and aimed to accurately represent the national population makeup, including people who are Black, Latinx and Native American. In both trials, the vaccines were found safe and over 90 percent effective, which is excellent. Existing vaccine monitoring systems like the National Healthcare Safety Network will continue to track and report results to ensure safety and share any possible side effects.

**How did this vaccine become available so quickly?**
No corners have been cut in developing a safe, effective COVID-19 vaccine, despite the speed of that development. High-speed development was the aim of this process in order to respond to the health and economic crisis. Governments around the world have eliminated financial barriers that typically slow down vaccine testing and production. And together, scientists from around the world were able to build on decades of vaccine knowledge to speed up development. Vaccine manufacturers are still required to follow all Federal Drug Administration (FDA) guidelines and provide their clinical trial data on effectiveness and safety to the FDA. These results are thoroughly reviewed before approval.

**Will I have a reaction if I take the vaccine?**
Certain allergic reactions and side effects can be expected for any medicine, but they are rare and providers are equipped and ready to effectively deal with them. As the COVID vaccine is administered to more communities, existing vaccine monitoring systems will continue to track and report any side effects. At this point, reactions have been minimal and typically include things like soreness at the injection site, low grade fever and mild body aches. This reaction is your body responding to the vaccine by creating the defense you will need to fight off the virus.

**Why should people who are Black, Native American or Latinx trust the vaccine?**
There are many reasons why victims of racism, particularly in healthcare settings, are vaccine hesitant. Our communities have experienced hundreds of years of systemic and individual racism in medical settings. With the process of development and delivery of the COVID-19 vaccines, hopefully, this is changing. The approved COVID-19 vaccines have been tested and monitored around the world and work well against the virus. These vaccines have been tested on volunteers from many backgrounds, including Blacks, Latinxs, Native-Americans and show positive results. And scientists from our communities have been instrumental in the development, testing and distribution of the vaccines.

**How much will it cost to get the vaccine?**
The vaccine is free. Providers should not charge you for either the vaccine itself or the administration of the vaccine.
How will my personal information be protected if I choose to take the vaccine?
Personal information for those getting vaccinated will be treated like all other health care data and is subject to privacy laws. Specifically, Colorado will not share any personally identifying information for any individual receiving the vaccine with the federal government.

How will the vaccination process work?
Both vaccinations approved for use require two shots to acquire immunity to the virus. These shots need to be given several weeks apart. Your health care provider should give you instructions on how to complete the immunizations as well as information about any potential side effects and how to seek follow up care should you need it. After beginning the process, you should assume you will need about three months until you reach immunization. And even after that, you should continue to wear a mask and wash your hands frequently as other communities achieve immunization as well.

How soon can I get vaccinated?
Since the FDA has approved two COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S., states have developed plans to distribute the doses as they become available. Everyone will be able to receive a vaccine, but not everyone will be vaccinated right away. Health care workers, long-term care residents and older adults have been prioritized in Colorado to receive the vaccine first, followed by other high-risk groups. Vaccines won’t be available to adults in the general public for several months, and all Coloradans should continue to wear masks, social distance and wash hands frequently to fight against the pandemic until roughly three months after they are vaccinated.

Can children and pregnant women be vaccinated?
Vaccine trials have only recently begun including children between the ages of 12 and 18 and have not yet been conducted among younger children. Currently there are no plans to vaccinate children under 16 until safety and efficacy in these populations is determined through clinical trials. People who are pregnant or breastfeeding and part of a group recommended to receive COVID-19 vaccine, such as healthcare personnel, may choose to be vaccinated. Pregnant and breastfeeding people can, but are not required to, talk to their health care provider before getting vaccinated.

How long will it take for vaccinations to end the pandemic?
We can end this pandemic over the coming months by creating the community immunity we need. An end to the deaths, illnesses and hardships of our global pandemic is in sight as effective and safe vaccines come to Colorado. Most public health experts predict that by the end of 2021, the worst impacts of the pandemic should be over.