

# Five things to know about the 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccines

... from Premera Blue Cross Blue Shield



On Tuesday, September 12, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention approved two COVID-19 mRNA vaccines, from Pfizer and Moderna, for those six months and older, and the Novavax vaccine for those ages 12 and older.

With cold and flu season approaching, it's important to stay up to date with vaccines as exposure to viruses will be more likely in the coming months. To help make that process easy, we've answered some common questions about COVID vaccines below.

## 1 What's the difference between an mRNA vaccine and other types of vaccines?<sup>1</sup>

The Moderna and Pfizer vaccines use mRNA, which causes cells to create antibodies to fight the infection or virus. These vaccines work a different way than traditional vaccines, such as the Novavax vaccine, which contain a weakened or dead bacteria or virus. With an mRNA vaccine, you aren't exposed to the virus, nor can you get the virus from this type of vaccine.

## 2 **Are the updated COVID vaccines safe and effective?**

Yes, COVID mRNA vaccines have been thoroughly tested and the results studied to ensure they are safe. The updated Moderna and Pfizer vaccines are based on the booster doses that were available last fall. The effectiveness of these vaccines against mild, moderate, and severe cases of COVID is 90%.

The Novavax vaccine is also incredibly safe and is considered a traditional vaccine. Its components are like those used in vaccines for shingles, DTaP, and others. For more information about the Novavax vaccine, [this FDA fact sheet](#) is a great resource.

## 3 **Can I get sick from the vaccine?**

Because the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines use mRNA, they contain no weakened or dead virus and cannot make you sick with COVID although you may feel some flu-like symptoms that last for a few hours. Vaccines can take one to two weeks to become fully effective. However, if you were exposed to the virus before receiving your shot, or shortly after, you may still get sick.

## 4 **Can I get the flu and the COVID vaccines at the same time?**

Yes. Clinical data has shown that getting COVID, flu, and/or RSV vaccines together for those who are eligible is safe and effective. People are encouraged to talk with their provider to determine whether they should receive multiple vaccines at once.

Getting multiple vaccines at once saves time for both patients and providers by avoiding the need to schedule multiple appointments. Overall, it is recommended that anyone who is eligible should receive all applicable respiratory disease vaccines this fall for the best protection.

## 5 **Why is there a new COVID vaccine?**

The virus that causes COVID continues to change. For example, researchers are currently learning more about a newer variant called BA.2.86. That's why it's important to use all the best tools we have to fight COVID. The updated 2023-2024 COVID vaccines target the Omicron subvariant XBB.1.5 and are our best defense against COVID this year.

## Discrimination is Against the Law

Premera Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alaska (Premera) complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Premera does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Premera provides free aids and services to people with disabilities to communicate effectively with us, such as qualified sign language interpreters and written information in other formats (large print, audio, accessible electronic formats, other formats). Premera provides free language services to people whose primary language is not English, such as qualified interpreters and information written in other languages. If you need these services, contact the Civil Rights Coordinator. If you believe that Premera has failed to provide these services or discriminated in another way on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation, you can file a grievance with: Civil Rights Coordinator — Complaints and Appeals, PO Box 91102, Seattle, WA 98111, Toll free: 855-332-4535, Fax: 425-918-5592, TTY: 711, Email [AppealsDepartmentInquiries@Premera.com](mailto:AppealsDepartmentInquiries@Premera.com). You can file a grievance in person or by mail, fax, or email. If you need help filing a grievance, the Civil Rights Coordinator is available to help you. You can also file a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights, electronically through the Office for Civil Rights Complaint Portal, available at <https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf>, or by mail or phone at: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Ave SW, Room 509F, HHH Building, Washington, D.C. 20201, 1-800-368-1019, 800-537-7697 (TDD). Complaint forms are available at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html>.

## Language Assistance

**PAUNAWA:** Kung nagsasalita ka ng Tagalog, maaari kang gumamit ng mga serbisyo ng tulong sa wika nang walang bayad. Tumawag sa 800-508-4722 (TTY: 711).

**ATENCIÓN:** si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 800-508-4722 (TTY: 711).

**주의:** 한국어를 사용하시는 경우, 언어 지원 서비스를 무료로 이용하실 수 있습니다. 800-508-4722 (TTY: 711) 번으로 전화해 주십시오.

**LUS CEEV:** Yog tias koj hais lus Hmoob, cov kev pab txog lus, muaj kev pab dawb rau koj. Hu rau 800-508-4722 (TTY: 711).

**ВНИМАНИЕ:** Если вы говорите на русском языке, то вам доступны бесплатные услуги перевода. Звоните 800-508-4722 (телетайп: 711).

**注意:** 如果您使用繁體中文，您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電 800-508-4722 (TTY: 711)。

**MO LOU SILAFIA:** Afai e te tautala Gagana fa'a Sāmoa, o loo iai auaunaga fesoasoan, e fai fua e leai se togoti, mo oe, Telefoni mai: 800-508-4722 (TTY: 711).

**ໂປດຊາບ:** ຖ້າວ່າ ທ່ານເວົ້າພາສາ ລາວ, ການບໍລິການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອດ້ານພາສາ, ໂດຍບໍ່ເສັຽຄ່າ, ແມ່ນມີພ້ອມໃຫ້ທ່ານ. ໂທ 800-508-4722 (TTY: 711).

**注意事項:** 日本語を話される場合、無料の言語支援をご利用いただけます。800-508-4722 (TTY:711) まで、お電話にてご連絡ください。

**PAKDAAR:** Nu saritaem ti Ilocano, ti serbisyo para ti baddang ti lengguahe nga awanan bayadna, ket sidadaan para kenyam. Awagan ti 800-508-4722 (TTY: 711).

**CHÚ Ý:** Nếu bạn nói Tiếng Việt, có các dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ miễn phí dành cho bạn. Gọi số 800-508-4722 (TTY: 711).

**УВАГА!** Якщо ви розмовляєте українською мовою, ви можете звернутися до безкоштовної служби мовної підтримки.

Телефонуйте за номером 800-508-4722 (телетайп: 711).

**เรียน:** ถ้าคุณพูดภาษาไทยคุณสามารถใช้บริการช่วยเหลือทางภาษาได้ฟรี โทร 800-508-4722 (TTY: 711).

**ACHTUNG:** Wenn Sie Deutsch sprechen, stehen Ihnen kostenlos sprachliche Hilfsdienstleistungen zur Verfügung. Rufnummer: 800-508-4722 (TTY: 711).

**UWAGA:** Jeżeli mówisz po polsku, możesz skorzystać z bezpłatnej pomocy językowej. Zadzwoń pod numer 800-508-4722 (TTY: 711).

**ملحوظة:** إذا كنت تتحدث اذكر اللغة، فإن خدمات المساعدة اللغوية تتوافر لك بالمجان. اتصل برقم 800-508-4722 (رقم هاتف الصم والبكم: 711).

**ATANSYON:** Si w pale Kreyòl Ayisyen, gen sèvis èd pou lang ki disponib gratis pou ou. Rele 800-508-4722 (TTY: 711).

**ATTENTION:** Si vous parlez français, des services d'aide linguistique vous sont proposés gratuitement. Appelez le 800-508-4722 (ATS: 711).

**ATENÇÃO:** Se fala português, encontram-se disponíveis serviços linguísticos, grátis. Ligue para 800-508-4722 (TTY: 711).

**ATTENZIONE:** In caso la lingua parlata sia l'italiano, sono disponibili servizi di assistenza linguistica gratuiti. Chiamare il numero 800-508-4722 (TTY: 711).

**توجه:** اگر به زبان فارسی گفتگو می کنید، تسهیلات زبانی بصورت رایگان برای شما فراهم می باشد. با 800-508-4722 (TTY: 711) تماس بگیرید.