Coronavirus FAQs: What Veterans need to know

Our call centers and some VA health facilities are currently experiencing very high numbers of calls. To help us address the most urgent needs first, we ask that you use our online tools and frequently asked questions (FAQs) for routine or non-urgent questions. We'll continue to update this page as the situation changes.

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VA coronavirus chatbot

You can also use our VA coronavirus chatbot to get answers to your questions.
[Go to the chatbot](#)

Visit the CDC for general coronavirus questions

For general questions about COVID-19, such as symptoms, prevention steps, guidance for travelers, and more, [visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)](#).

Coronavirus-specific concerns

How can I stay informed about COVID-19 vaccines at VA?

We're working closely with the CDC and other federal partners to provide COVID-19 vaccines to Veterans and VA health care personnel.

[Get the latest updates on COVID-19 vaccines at VA](#)

What should I do if I have symptoms of COVID-19?

If you have any of these emergency warning signs, call 911 to get help now:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent (continuing) pain or pressure in the chest
- Bluish lips or face
- Suddenly feeling or acting confused
- Trouble waking up or staying awake

If you have other symptoms of COVID-19, call us before going to a VA health facility. You can also send your VA provider a secure message. Contacting us first helps us keep you and others safe. Go to the CDC website for the full list of COVID-19 symptoms.

Our Annie text messaging service can help you monitor your symptoms

This service can advise you when to contact your VA care team or your facility's advice nurse. It also provides general wellness tips and steps you can take to protect yourself. Ask your VA care team to assign the service to you. Or, subscribe to Annie coronavirus precautions messages yourself.

If you'd like to talk to someone about coronavirus concerns, like testing, exposure, and prevention at VA, call our MyVA411 main information line at 800-698-2411 (TTY: 711).

I don't have symptoms, but I feel anxious and overwhelmed. What can I do?

First, know that you're not alone. We're here for you. Concerns about COVID-19 can be stressful for many people. You can take steps to manage stress and get support.

- **Stay connected and healthy.** Stay in touch with friends and family by phone and social media. Follow your normal routine as much as possible, and get enough sleep and exercise.

- **Get the flu vaccine this fall.** If you're worried about your risk of serious illness, one of the best things you can do is get your flu shot as early as you can. Learn more about getting your flu shot

- **Keep your existing mental health appointments.** If you currently have regular sessions, you can change them to telehealth (phone or video) appointments by sending your provider a secure message.

- **Ask for a new mental health appointment.** If you need same-day mental health care—or want to request a new appointment—call your local VA health facility. Find a VA location

[Get more VA tips for maintaining your mental health](#)

[Visit the CDC to learn more about managing COVID-19 stress and anxiety](#)

What's VA doing to deal with COVID-19?

We have activated VA's emergency management coordination cell (EMCC), and are doing clinical screenings at all VA facilities.

[Learn about VA's public health response](#)

As one of the nation's leaders in health research, we're also working to find ways to better prevent and treat COVID-19.

[Learn more about volunteering for coronavirus research at VA](#)

Should I get a flu shot this year?

Yes. Both the flu and COVID-19 can lead to serious illness and even death. They may be even more dangerous if you get them at the same time. Your risk of serious illness is even higher if you're over age 65 or if you have a health problem like diabetes. So get your flu shot as early as you can this year. It's the best way to protect yourself and your family.

If you're enrolled in VA health care

You can get a no-cost flu shot safely from any of these locations:

- **Your nearest VA health facility**. Contact your provider or your nearest VA health facility to ask when you can come in to get your flu shot. Or ask your provider if you can get your flu shot at your next scheduled appointment.
  [Find your nearest VA health facility](#)
- **A VA-approved retail pharmacy in our community care network**. Call ahead to confirm services and hours and to make sure they have the type of flu shot you need. Be sure to bring a valid, government-issued ID (like your Veterans Health ID card or driver's license).
  [Find community pharmacies in our network](#)
- **A VA-approved urgent care provider in our community care network.** To use this option, you must have received care from a VA or in-network community provider in the past 24 months. Call ahead to confirm services and hours and to make sure they

have the type of flu shot you need.
[Find community urgent care providers in our network](#)

Note: You don't need a VA referral to get your flu shot from a community provider. But bring our [flu shot information flyer (PDF)](#) to share with the provider. To check your eligibility, call your nearest VA health facility. You can also call us at [800-698-2411](#), select option 1 and then select option 1 again.

If you're not enrolled in VA health care

You may be able to get a no-cost flu shot through your private health insurance or a program like Medicare. To learn more about flu prevention and to find where to get a flu shot, visit the [CDC website](#).

More coronavirus-specific questions

- Why should I consider volunteering for coronavirus research at VA?

COVID-19 testing at VA

Can I be tested for COVID-19 at a VA health care facility?

We offer diagnostic testing for Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care and meet the [CDC testing criteria](#). At this time, we're not charging a copay for testing.
[Learn how to apply for VA health care](#)

To get a test, you must have an appointment. You can request an appointment in any of these 3 ways:

- [Send a secure message](#) to your VA health care provider

- [Schedule an appointment online](#)

- Or call your provider
  [Find your provider's phone number](#)

For your safety, please don't go in person to a VA health care facility without an appointment.

Please also be aware that everyone who enters our facilities will be screened for COVID-19, and must wear a mask that covers their mouth and nose. If you have more questions about testing, please call our MyVA411 main information line at [800-698-2411](#) ([TTY: 711](#)).

If I got a COVID-19 test at VA, when and how can I get my results?

We usually have test results in about **3 to 4 days**.

If you were tested at a VA health facility and you have a My HealtheVet Premium account, you can get your test results online as soon as we have them. If you don't have a My HealtheVet Premium account, you can get one now.
[Learn how to get your results through My HealtheVet](#)

Your VA or community care provider will also call you with your test results when they're available. If you have concerns about your results, call or send a secure message to your provider.

What should I do while I'm waiting for the results?

1. Monitor your symptoms. Our [Annie text messaging service](#) can remind you when to contact your care team or a nurse advice line.

If your symptoms get worse, contact your provider or nearest VA health facility:

- [Send a secure message to your provider](#)
- [Find your provider's or facility's phone number](#)

  Note: If you call your facility's nurse advice line, please know that our nurses can't give you your test results. They can answer health-related questions. But they don't have access to your personal health information.

If you or someone else has any of these symptoms, call 911 to get help now:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent (continuing) pain or pressure in the chest
- Bluish lips or face
- Suddenly feeling or acting confused
- Trouble waking up or staying awake

[Get the latest symptom information on the CDC website](#)

2. Follow CDC guidelines to prevent spreading the virus to others. Until you get your results, you won't know if you have an active infection or not.
[Go to the CDC website for COVID-19 prevention advice](#)

What should I do after I get my test results?

If your results are positive

This means you had an active infection at the time of testing. Your provider will give you advice on what to do next to make sure you get any care you need. You'll also need to continue to monitor your symptoms and separate yourself from others to prevent spreading the virus.
[Get CDC advice on what to do when you have COVID-19](#)

If your results are negative

This means you didn't have an active infection at the time of testing. It doesn't mean you haven't been infected since that time or won't become infected in the future. Continue to follow safe practices, like wearing a mask, physical distancing, and washing your hands often.
[Get CDC advice on how to prevent COVID-19](#)

Note: This test also won't tell you if you were infected with the coronavirus in the past. That's a different type of test called an antibody test. [Learn more about COVID-19 tests on the FDA website](#)

Health care, appointments, and more

What should I do if I need to schedule a VA health appointment?

If you need care, please don't delay. We can provide safe care to meet your needs. We encourage you to consider a phone or video appointment for routine needs. If you or VA canceled an appointment due to COVID-19, you can contact us anytime to reschedule.

The fastest way to schedule an appointment is to contact your VA health care provider directly. You can do that in either of these 2 ways:

- Send a secure message to your provider, **or**
- Call your provider
  Find your VA health facility's phone number

You may also be able to request some types of appointments—like mental health appointments—online through our VA appointments tool.

If your provider schedules a video telehealth appointment

Your provider will give you instructions about where to go for your video appointment. Or they'll send you a link to join VA Video Connect. You can also join video appointments through our VA appointments tool.

If you go to a VA health facility for an in-person appointment

You'll need to wear a mask that covers your mouth and nose. You'll also need to complete our COVID-19 symptom screening when you arrive.
Learn more about how we'll keep you safe

What should I do if VA canceled my appointment or procedure?

For safety reasons, we've canceled some in-person appointments and elective procedures due to COVID-19. But we want to make sure you get the care you need as soon as possible.

If we haven't contacted you to reschedule your appointment or procedure, please contact us. We'll help you schedule a new appointment. Your provider may recommend a phone or video appointment for some needs.

Find the phone number for your VA provider

Send a secure message to your provider

Is my VA health facility open for in-person care?

This depends on the facility and the current conditions in your local area.

Your safety is our top priority. We're carefully monitoring conditions. We'll continue to offer expanded services at VA facilities that meet VA, federal, state, and local criteria for safe in-person care.

You'll also have access to telehealth appointments by phone or video. Your provider may recommend telehealth for you.

As the number of COVID-19 cases rises, your VA facility may temporarily take one or more of these actions:

- Hold at its current level of expanded in-person services

- Reduce select in-person services

- Add or change safety measures (like not allowing anyone except patients and staff to enter the facility)

We appreciate your support, patience, and understanding as we work to protect you, other Veterans, and our staff.

Find out which services your facility is now offering:

- [Send your provider a secure message](#), **or**

- [Contact your VA health facility](#)

If you do go for care, please [contact your care team](#) first. This helps us keep you safe. And please know that you'll need to wear a mask that covers your mouth and nose. You'll also need to complete our symptom screening before entering the facility.

Note: If you're experiencing a life-threatening medical emergency, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room. You don't need a VA referral or approval to go to a non-VA emergency room in your community.

How do I refill my prescriptions?

Please request refills as soon as possible, but no later than **10 days** before you need more medication.

Please also check that we have your current mailing address on file in your [VA.gov profile](#) so we send your prescriptions to the right address. If you need to, you can sign in to [change your address online](#).

Note: If you currently get your prescription sent to you by mail, you'll continue to receive your refill requests as normal.

You'll need to actively request your refill in one of these ways:

- **Online** with the [My HealtheVet prescription refill and tracking tool](#).

- **Through your mobile device** with our new [Rx Refill mobile app](#).

- **By phone.** Call the number on your [prescription label](#) for your VA pharmacy's automated refill line or to speak to a pharmacy representative. Be sure to have your Rx number from the prescription label and Social Security number ready.

- **By mail.** Complete the prescription refill form that came with your medication. Mail the form to the VA pharmacy address listed on your medication paperwork.

For questions about your prescriptions, send a [secure message to your health care team](#) through My HealtheVet or call your local VA medical center.

[Find out what to do if you need more refills](#)

How can I get more refills for my prescription?

You can request a prescription renewal in one of these ways:

- **Call the number on your prescription label.** Be sure to have your Rx number from the [prescription label](#) and Social Security number ready. For some medications, your health care team may need to contact you before you can get more medication.

- [Send a secure message to your provider](#).

- **Call your local VA medical center.**
  [Find a VA location](#)

If your prescription renewal requires an in-person evaluation

If you need to renew a prescription for a medication that requires an in-person evaluation, we've temporarily updated our policy to allow this type of evaluation through telehealth (phone or video) appointment.

To request a telehealth appointment for a prescription renewal, [send a secure message to your provider](#).

More health care questions

- Do I need to wear a mask when I go to a VA hospital or other location?
- What is physical distancing, and how will VA use it to protect me?
- How else will VA protect me from exposure to COVID-19?
- What should I do if I have a community care appointment, or need a referral?
- What if I tried to call my clinic, and I can't get through?
- Can I visit a patient at a VA facility?
- If I've lost my job or health insurance, can I get VA health care?

Benefit payments, claims, claim exams, and other services

Will my benefit payment be delayed because of COVID-19?

No. We're currently processing all benefit payments as normal. This includes payments for disability, pension, education payments to your school, and more.

[View your VA benefit payments online](#)

Can I still file a claim or get help from my regional office?

Yes. We temporarily closed all of our 56 regional offices for in-person visits due to COVID-19. At this time, some offices have reopened with limited hours and services. These offices may be screening visitors for COVID-19 symptoms. We require everyone entering a VA facility to wear a mask that covers their mouth and nose.

For your safety and convenience, we continue to offer help online and by phone. Please call first to confirm services or ask about getting help by phone or video.
[Find a VA regional office](#)

To file a claim for VA benefits:

You can still file a claim online, by mail, or with the help of a trained professional. And we can still answer your questions by phone and through our online customer service tool. We're also continuing to support services like educational counseling, collecting information for fiduciary claims, and specially adaptive housing assistance by phone or approved video conferencing tools.

Learn how to file a claim online, by mail, or with the help of a trained professional for:

- [Disability benefits](#)

- Pension benefits
- GI Bill and related benefits
- Other benefits

To get help with education benefits:

Call 888-442-4551 toll-free. We're here Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. ET. If you have hearing loss, call TTY: 711.

To get help with other benefits:

Call 800-827-1000 toll-free. We're here Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. ET. If you have hearing loss, call TTY: 711.

To check on the status of your claim or appeal:

Use our online claim status tool

To stay updated on closures or service interruptions:

- Visit the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) news page.
- Call the benefits hotline toll-free at 800-827-1000.
- Follow us on social media.

VBA Facebook
VBA Twitter: @VAVetBenefits

Get more information about submitting paperwork and requesting extensions

What happens to my GI Bill benefits if my school changes to online classes or temporarily closes?

This depends on your school's actions, and your attendance. Please be sure we have your current email address on file. We can send certain information only electronically, and some schools have shifted to only electronic communication during this time.

You can sign in to update your email online through our "Ask a question" tool. Or call the Education Call Center toll-free at 888-442-4551, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. ET.

If your school changes to online classes

If you're currently receiving GI Bill benefits, payments will continue automatically. You don't have to do anything. You'll continue to receive the same monthly housing allowance payments you received for resident training until December 21, 2021, or until your school resumes normal operations.

We're working closely with schools to ensure enrollments are accurately certified and processed.

If your school temporarily closes

We'll continue paying your benefits through the end of the terms or 28 days, whichever is sooner.

If your school is in session, but you can't attend due to COVID-19

We can pay you through your last date of attendance, but not through the end of the term. This may result in debts and overpayment. If this happens, you can submit a waiver request.

Learn more about how COVID-19 may affect your education benefits

Learn more about electronic communication

Get more information about on-the-job training, apprenticeships, and work study

Is VA still doing claim exams (also called compensation and pension, or C&P, exams)?

Yes. After temporary changes due to COVID-19, we're starting to do in-person exams again in many locations. Our contract exam providers will conduct all in-person examinations.

Review locations where we're now offering in-person exams

We're also still doing many telehealth exams by phone or video. And we're doing more records' reviews using Acceptable Clinical Evidence (ACE) exams. This means we'll review your existing medical records and contact you for more information if needed, instead of requiring an in-person or telehealth exam.

If your claim requires an in-person exam and we can't conduct the exam in person

Please make sure we have your up-to-date mailing address, phone number, and email address.

Update your contact information online

A contract medical exam provider will contact you to reschedule an in-person exam for a later date when in-person exams are available in your area. You don't need to do anything else at this time.

What if I had or need an in-person appointment for VA benefits or services?

We temporarily closed our regional offices and stopped in-person appointments due to COVID-19. At this time, some offices have reopened with limited hours and services. These offices may be screening visitors for COVID-19 symptoms. We require everyone entering a VA facility to wear a mask that covers their mouth and nose.

For your safety and convenience, we continue to offer help online and by phone. Please call first to confirm services or ask about getting help by phone or video.
[Find a VA regional office](#)

Getting help online or by phone

We're using virtual services to hold appointments for some benefit activities by telephone or online video through [VA Video Connect](#) or other approved video meeting tools. Once your video appointment is scheduled, you'll receive a VA Video Connect link.

We'll work with you to change your in-person appointment to a virtual appointment for benefits and services such as:

- **Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E)**

- **Chapter 36 educational and career counseling**

- **Military service coordinators**

- **Home loans:** We're working with lenders and appraisers to offer temporary options to continue processing and closing loans remotely. You can continue to work with your lender to follow state and local laws for notarizing documents. And you can designate an attorney-in-fact to use a Power of Attorney to sign documents on your behalf at closing.

- **Specially Adapted Housing grants:** Our staff can help you complete the grant application process by phone, video, and email.

- **Fiduciary claims:** We can conduct many field exams by phone. In cases where a phone exam isn't appropriate, we may do a field exam through VA Video Connect. Our staff will contact you to set up a phone or video exam.

- **Transition assistance:** You can follow the VA Transition and Assistance Program (TAP) curriculum and other learning modules online. Use your Common Access Card- (CAC-)enabled device to access the course (number TGPS-US006) through the Department of Defense's [Joint Knowledge Online](#). You can also explore [VA benefits and services online.](#) For more help by phone, ask your DOD TAP manager to connect you with a VA benefits adviser.

Please work with your VA representative to reschedule appointments. If you have questions, you can also call us at [800-827-1000](#). We're here Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. ET.

More benefit and claim questions

- What if I need to turn in or sign paperwork for my claim or appeal?
- Can I have more time to apply for Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) after separation?
- What about on-the-job training, apprenticeships, and work study?

Debt, copays, appeals, and other financial concerns

If I receive VA disability or pension benefits, will I automatically get my second stimulus check?

Yes. If you receive VA disability or pension benefits, you'll automatically get your second stimulus check. This check is also called an economic impact payment. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) will send your check even if you don't file tax returns. You don't need to do anything.

If you didn't get your first stimulus check, or if you didn't get the full amount, you may still be eligible to get a payment in 2021.

To learn more, [go to the IRS.gov website](#).

Note: Use only IRS.gov to get information about your stimulus check. Be careful of scams. Unless you've asked the IRS to contact you, they'll never ask for personal or financial information by phone, email, or text. They also won't ask you to open an attachment or visit a website link.

Will my COVID-19 stimulus check lower my VA payments?

No. We won't count any money received as part of the COVID-19 stimulus package as income for VA disability compensation, individual unemployability (TDIU), VA pension, or parent Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) beneficiaries. This means your payments will stay the same.

Do I have to pay my VA copays at this time?

Yes.

From April 6, 2020, through December 31, 2020, we put our monthly copay patient statements on hold. We did this to help relieve financial stress due to COVID-19.

We've now started to send statements again.

Your January 2021 statement includes the total amount of any of these charges:

- **New copay charges** for health care and prescriptions you received from April 6, 2020, through December 31, 2020
- **Unpaid copay charges** for health care and prescriptions you received before April 2020

Please pay the total amount by the due date on your statement. This will help you avoid late fees, interest, or collection actions.

Find out how to pay your VA copay bill

If you can't pay your bill, we can help. Call us at 866-400-1238 or 800-698-2411 (TTY: 711). We're here Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET. We'll work with you to determine your debt relief options.

Learn more about requesting financial hardship assistance

Watch a video about financial hardship options (YouTube)

What if I can't pay my existing VA debt?

On April 3, 2020, we paused collections on new VA debt. We did this to help relieve financial stress due to COVID-19.

On **January 1, 2021**, we started to send out debt collection letters again. If we granted you an extension due to COVID-19, we'll start collection again on **February 1, 2021**.

If you can't make your payments, we can help. We'll work with you to determine your debt relief options. To avoid late charges, interest, or other collection action, make a payment or request help now.

If you have debt that we're managing here at VA

- **For debt related to VA benefits:** Call our Debt Management Center at [800-827-0648](#) (or [1-612-713-6415](#) from overseas). We're here Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. ET. Or send us a question through our [online question form (called IRIS)](#).

- **For debt related to VA health care:** Call our Health Resources Center at [866-400-1238](#) or [800-698-2411](#). We're here Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET. [Learn more about paying your VA health care copay bill](#)

Note: Do you receive a monthly VA benefit payment? We'll keep part or all of each payment to help reduce your debt, unless we approve another debt relief option.

If you have VA debt that we've already transferred to the U.S. Department of the Treasury

Call the phone number on your collection letter. Call right away to avoid more late charges, interest, or other collection actions.

Please don't send us payment for this debt. This will delay posting of payment to your account.

What if I'm having trouble paying my VA direct or VA-backed home loan during this time?

If you're experiencing financial hardship due directly or indirectly to COVID-19, call your loan servicer right away to request a forbearance plan. Your loan servicer is the company that collects your mortgage payments.

Forbearance lets you pause or reduce your loan payments for a period of time, without paying late fees or other penalties. Under a recent law, you may be able to request up to 12 months of mortgage forbearance on a VA direct or VA-backed home loan.

Note: Forbearance doesn't lower or forgive the amount of money you owe on your loan. You'll need to work with your servicer at the end of the forbearance period to set up a repayment plan.

If you have a VA-backed home loan

Call 877-827-3702 to talk with a VA home loan representative to request a forbearance plan or other help. We're here Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. ET.

If you have a Native American Direct Loan (NADL)

Your loan servicer is BSI Financial Services. To request a forbearance plan, contact the BSI default resolution team at 800-327-7861 or customercare@bsifinancial.com.

You can also call 877-827-3702 to talk with a VA home loan representative about other ways we can help you.

Learn more about how we can help you avoid foreclosure

Get more help from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB):

- Find a government-approved housing counselor near you
- Get COVID-19 specific resources
- Call the 24/7 HOPE™ Hotline at 888-995-4673

More financial questions

- If I've lost my job, can I get help with my VA copays over time?
- What if I've been diagnosed with COVID-19 and need immediate action on my VA appeal?
- If I've lost my job or health insurance, can I get VA health care?
- How do I get help if I'm homeless or at risk of becoming homeless?
- How can I protect myself against coronavirus-related scams?

Status of VA national cemeteries and burials

Are VA national cemeteries open?

Yes. VA national cemeteries remain open but, for the safety of employees and visitors, we ask that visitors follow physical distancing and travel restrictions based on CDC and local health department guidelines.

Some cemetery areas may be closed to the public. You should contact the cemetery for more information.

Find updates on the operating status of individual national cemeteries

Can I still schedule a burial at a national cemetery?

Yes. To schedule an interment, contact the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 800-535-1117. VA national cemeteries remain open for direct interments of Veterans and eligible dependents.

Families must follow all COVID-19 safety requirements for attendee limits, masks, and physical distancing.
Learn more about cemetery safety requirements

If you would like to cancel or postpone an interment that's already scheduled, please contact the cemetery directly to cancel the service and to reschedule future services when ready.

Can I schedule a committal service or a military funeral honors service?

Yes. We're holding committal and memorial services again at most VA national cemeteries. We've been contacting families who were unable to hold a service due to the pandemic so we can help them arrange one. Military honors are based on local availability.

Families must follow all COVID-19 safety requirements for service attendee limits, handling floral arrangements, wearing masks, and physical distancing.
Learn more about cemetery safety requirements

Conditions and restrictions at local cemeteries can and will change in response to state, local, and federal guidelines and orders. Contact your local cemetery for specific information or details.

Get operating status updates for individual VA national cemeteries

Find your local VA cemetery

Helpful online tools

- **Send a secure message**

Sign in to My HealtheVet to send a message to your VA provider.

- ## Refill your VA prescriptions online

Refill your prescriptions online through My HealtheVet and track delivery of your medicines.

- ## View your VA payments

View your past payment information for benefits like disability, pension, education payments, and more.

- ## Check your VA claim or appeal status

Check the status of a VA claim or appeal for benefits, including disability compensation, pension, VA health care, and more.

- ## Change your address in your VA.gov profile

Update your address and other contact information for VA benefits and services.

- ## Reschedule, cancel, or view your VA appointment

Request, reschedule, or cancel your VA health care appointments online.

- **Change your VA direct deposit information**

Find out how to change your direct deposit information online

More information

- **How to apply for VA health care**

Find out how to prepare and apply for VA health care online, by phone, or by mail.

- **Visit the CDC's COVID-19 website**

Get guidance for high-risk groups, travelers, COVID-19 resources for the community, and more at the CDC.

- **Watch Dr. Stone's YouTube message for Veterans**

Dr. Richard Stone, VHA Executive in Charge, encourages Veterans to continue leading by modeling healthy behaviors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 vaccines at VA

We're working closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other federal partners to provide COVID-19 vaccines to Veterans and VA health care

personnel. We know you have a lot of questions, and information is changing quickly. Please check back often for updates. We'll continue to update this page as we have new information to offer.

Stay informed and help us prepare
Sign up for an easy way to stay informed about our COVID-19 plans.

When you sign up, we'll also ask about your interest in getting a vaccine when one is available to you. By sharing your interest, you can help us better prepare as we work to offer vaccines to more Veterans.

Note: You don't need to sign up to get a vaccine.

Sign up to stay informed

On this page

- [Who can get a COVID-19 vaccine at VA at this time](#)
- [Basic information about getting your vaccine at VA](#)
- [Questions you may have about COVID-19 vaccines](#)
- [More helpful information and resources](#)

Who can get a COVID-19 vaccine at VA at this time

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized the first 2 COVID-19 vaccines. We currently have a limited amount of these vaccines.

We've worked with the CDC and other federal partners to develop a phased plan. Our goal is to do the most good for the most people during this time.

Under this plan, these groups are now being vaccinated at some VA health care facilities:

- VA health care personnel. Vaccinating our VA health care personnel helps us continue to provide care for Veterans.

- Veterans living in our long-term care facilities

- Veterans who receive care at VA and are at high risk from COVID-19 based on VA and CDC [risk criteria](#). At many VA health care facilities, this group includes all Veterans who are at least 75 years old. Each facility will determine when Veterans in this group can receive a vaccine. They'll base this decision on vaccine availability, local needs, as well as the strict storage and handling requirements of the vaccines.

Some designated family caregivers may qualify for vaccines:

- Family caregivers who are enrolled in our Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) are eligible for vaccination when the Veteran they care for becomes eligible. If the Veteran you care for meets the criteria above, both you and the Veteran may be able to get vaccinated now. Vaccinating caregivers helps us support and protect Veterans.

Please wait for us to contact you about getting a COVID-19 vaccine. When you can get a vaccine at your local VA health facility, we'll contact you. You don't need to call us to reserve a vaccine or come to a VA facility to request or receive a vaccine until we contact you. Our staff will only provide vaccines to Veterans and designated caregivers who are currently eligible for one based on VA and CDC risk criteria.

Be aware that some VA health care facilities are hosting large vaccination events or asking Veterans to call the facility directly to schedule a vaccination. If you receive communications from your local VA health care facility about getting vaccinated at a large-scale event or contacting the facility to make an appointment, we encourage you to do so if you are in one of the risk groups currently being vaccinated at VA.

If you have questions, here's how to get the information you need:

- For ongoing updates on our COVID-19 vaccine plan, sign up for email updates.
- For more details on your local VA health facility's current plan, find your facility's website. On the facility website menu, go to **Health care services**, then **COVID-19**.
- For answers to general questions about getting a vaccine at VA, read our FAQs below. If you don't find your answer there, call our MyVA411 main information line at 800-698-2411 (TTY: 711).
- For more information about how your personal risk for COVID-19 will determine when you can get a vaccine, send a secure message to your VA health care provider. If you don't receive care at VA, contact your primary health care provider.

How we created our phased COVID-19 vaccine plan

We based our phased COVID-19 vaccine plan on these criteria from CDC guidelines:

- Risk of becoming infected with the virus
- Risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19
- Risk of spreading the virus to others
- Risk of harm to society if essential workers, including health care personnel, are unable to work

We are following CDC guidelines for determining who is at high risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19. Factors that may influence the risk of severe illness include the following:

- **Age.** The risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19 increases with age.

- **Existing health problems.** People with certain health problems (like diabetes, heart disease, or obesity) have a higher risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19.

- **Other factors** that raise a person's risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19, such as living in a nursing home or other group living facility.

To learn more about people at increased risk, go to the CDC website.

Basic information about getting your vaccine at VA

As the supply of vaccine increases, we'll work with our care teams to let you know your options. It's your choice if you want to get a vaccine or not. Your decision won't affect your VA health care or any of your VA benefits in any way.

Where we'll offer vaccines

The first 2 authorized COVID-19 vaccines require special storage and handling. Because of this, we have a limited supply of vaccines. Our VA facilities will provide vaccines to Veterans receiving VA health care who are most at risk.

When more vaccines are available, we'll determine when we can provide vaccines through our community provider network.

Eligibility

When more vaccines become available, we plan to offer a free COVID-19 vaccine to all Veterans receiving VA health care who want one.

Your team will contact you when a vaccine is available to you. If you decide to get the vaccine, your team will help you schedule your appointments.

If you're not currently receiving health care through VA, find out if you're eligible and how to apply now.

Safety

The U.S. vaccine safety system ensures that all vaccines are as safe as possible. Safety is a top priority as federal partners work to make COVID-19 vaccines available.

Before the FDA authorizes a vaccine for use, they carefully review the available safety data and clinical trial results for that vaccine. To learn more about the safety of the 2 authorized COVID-19 vaccines, read the FDA fact sheets:

- [FDA Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine fact sheet (PDF)](#)
- [FDA Moderna COVID-19 vaccine fact sheet (PDF)](#)

We'll closely monitor everyone who gets a COVID-19 vaccine for reactions, side effects, or adverse events. An adverse event is an injury or harm that happens to someone after they receive a vaccine, which may or may not have been caused by the vaccine.

We'll report this information in our vaccine monitoring and tracking system. This is the same system we use to monitor reactions to all vaccines, including those for the flu and shingles.

To learn more about COVID-19 vaccine safety, [go to the CDC website](#).

Privacy

We'll share the same information with the CDC that we share for other vaccines. This includes the following information:

- Demographic information (like age, gender, race, and ethnicity) that helps the CDC understand which groups of people are receiving the vaccine
- Adverse reactions to the vaccine

We won't share names or street addresses.

Questions you may have about COVID-19 vaccines

Vaccine research and FDA authorization

- Is there a cure or any FDA-approved treatments for COVID-19?
- Is there an FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccine?
- What is the FDA's role in approving a safe and effective vaccine for COVID-19?
- Is VA participating in COVID-19 research studies?
- Are authorized COVID-19 vaccines at VA different from vaccines received through research studies?

How COVID-19 vaccines work

- Why do I need a COVID-19 vaccine?
- How do vaccines for viruses like the coronavirus protect me from getting sick?
- How will getting a vaccine benefit my family and community?

- Can I get COVID-19 from either of the authorized vaccines?

Getting a COVID-19 vaccine

- How do I know if it's safe for me personally to get a COVID-19 vaccine?
- Should I get a COVID-19 vaccine even if I've already had COVID-19?
- Can I choose which authorized COVID-19 vaccine I get?
- Can I get a COVID-19 vaccine and flu or other vaccines at the same time?
- Can I change my mind after scheduling a time to get a vaccine?
- How many doses of a COVID-19 vaccine will I need to take? Will I need a booster dose?
- Do I need to get both vaccine doses at the same VA facility?
- What should I know if I get a COVID-19 vaccine outside of VA?

After getting a COVID-19 vaccine

- Will I have side effects after I get a COVID-19 vaccine?
- Can I still get COVID-19 after I get the vaccine?
- How long will a vaccine protect me from COVID-19?
- If I get a COVID-19 vaccine, can I stop wearing a mask in VA facilities?

For answers to more frequently asked questions about COVID-19 vaccines, go to the CDC website.

More helpful information and resources

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Coronavirus FAQs: What Veterans need to know

Get the latest updates on how the COVID-19 pandemic may affect your VA benefits and services.

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Find VA locations

Visit your local VA medical center website to learn more about COVID-19 vaccine preparation.

- ### VA's COVID-19 public health response

  Read more about our public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- ### Volunteer for coronavirus research at VA

  As one of the nation's leaders in health research, we're working to continue to find ways to prevent and treat COVID-19. Find out how you can be part of these efforts and what to expect if you volunteer.

- ### Apply for VA health care online (VA Form 10-10EZ)

  Start your application for VA health care now.

Last updated: January 22, 2021