



ATU COVID-19 VACCINE FAQ

Throughout this pandemic, ATU has been fighting to protect the safety and health of our members and the communities we serve. Although we have lost far too many members, we have saved many more by winning important safety and health protections. Our efforts have been designed to buy time until safe and effective vaccines became available. That time has arrived.

Vaccines from multiple manufacturers have now been approved, but widespread participation is far more important than receiving any one particular vaccine. Although each vaccine is slightly different, our collective effort to vaccinate most of the population is what will ultimately protect us from this deadly disease.

Pfizer and Moderna

Available in the U.S. and Canada

Should transit workers get vaccinated?

Yes. Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect yourself, your family, your coworkers, your community, and the transit industry from COVID-19.

We all have a part to play in ending this pandemic.

ATU is following the guidance of medical and health experts who recommend widespread vaccination, in addition to our other tools, such as masks and social distancing, to help bring an end to this terrible pandemic. But the vaccines will only be as effective as the number of people who get them. Widespread participation is vitally important to get our countries back to normal. Through vaccination we can prevent more illness and death, protect our families, and soon welcome riders back to our transit systems.

Are the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines safe?

Yes. Every study, every phase, and every trial of the approved Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines have been reviewed by the FDA, Health Canada, and safety review boards. None of the vaccine trials have reported any serious safety concerns.

Large trials were conducted by medical and health experts.

The approved vaccines have been developed through a transparent and rigorous process that included more than 73,000 trial participants from around the world. More than 25,000 people from the communities most impacted by COVID-19, including Black, Latino, and older people, participated in these trials.

Talk to your doctor.

If you are concerned about a personal health condition or medication interactions; if you are pregnant or breastfeeding; or, if you have a history of severe allergic reaction to injectables or vaccines, you should discuss vaccination with your doctor.

You might experience minor side effects.

Any vaccine or medication can cause side effects. You might experience side effects following your first or second dose of the approved vaccines, however these are usually minor, such as a sore arm or low-grade fever, and go away within a few days. Severe allergic reactions from the approved vaccines are very rare. The approved vaccines do not contain the SARS-CoV-2 virus and cannot infect you with COVID-19.

*More than **242 million** doses of the COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in the United States and Canada.*

(as of April 26, 2021)

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Are the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines effective?

Yes. The approved Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have been shown to be about 95% effective at preventing both mild and severe illness caused by COVID-19. That level of protection did not vary across age groups, gender, or racial demographics in trials. You should take the vaccine even if you have previously been infected by COVID-19 because we aren't sure how long your natural immunity will last.

Protection takes time.

The approved vaccines require two doses to be given several weeks apart, and it does take time for immunity to build up in your body. Protection against illness does not start until about two weeks after the first dose and the vaccines are not fully effective until about a week after the second dose. Right now, we do not know how long someone is protected from COVID-19 after vaccination and this is the subject of additional studies. Booster shots might be required in the future.

The virus is constantly evolving.

Scientists are working to determine how effective approved COVID-19 vaccines will be against new variants of the virus that have been recently discovered in the United Kingdom, South Africa, and elsewhere. While it appears that existing vaccines, including Pfizer's and Moderna's, will provide protection against illness, booster shots for specific variants could be required in the future. Rapid vaccination and continued use of prevention measures are still important to limit the spread of, and illness caused by, COVID-19.

Do I still need to wear a mask and practice social distancing?

Yes. Stopping the pandemic requires that we use every tool and measure available. All of the approved COVID-19 vaccines work with your immune system so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. Other steps, like wearing a mask, social distancing, good ventilation, and regular hand washing, help reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus or spreading it to others.

We still need to look out for each other.

Trials of all approved vaccines were primarily designed to determine if vaccinated participants were protected from illness caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. They did not determine if participants could contract the virus without symptoms and then spread COVID-19 to others. Medical and health experts are hopeful that vaccinated people won't be able to spread the virus, but more research is needed. In the meantime, everyone — even vaccinated people — will need to remain vigilant.

When will COVID-19 vaccines be available to transit workers?

Availability of approved COVID-19 vaccines to transit workers will vary widely by state, province, and city. This includes both the number and brand of vaccines at any given location. Individuals will not be able to choose which manufacturer's vaccine they receive. You should contact your local health department for details about the rollout of vaccines in your area.

Essential transit workers have been prioritized.

The ATU International and ATU Canada called on our federal governments to prioritize transit workers for vaccine access and they listened. The CDC's scientific advisors recommended that public transit workers be included in Phase 1b of vaccine distribution with other frontline essential workers in the US. In Canada, Health Canada's advisors recommended that essential workers be included in Stage 2.

States and provinces will make final decisions.

Despite this federal guidance, states and provinces will make final determinations about vaccine distribution. Each jurisdiction is moving through phases at different speeds and prioritizing different parts of the population. In some jurisdictions, ATU members will become eligible for the vaccine due to their age or underlying health conditions before they become eligible as essential transit workers.

Visit <https://www.atu.org/covid-19/> for more information.

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