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COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions
Updated September 15, 2022

JCPH PUBLIC HEALTH ORDERS

1. **What local public health orders are in effect in Jefferson County?**
   Currently, there are no local public health orders in effect in Jefferson County. To access past orders from JCPH, visit our local public health orders webpage at www.jeffco.us/4114/Local-Public-Health-Orders.

   While the Jefferson County indoor masking PHO expired on Feb. 11, 2022 at 11:59 p.m., any state mask requirements remain in place in the county – such as CDPHE's Public Health Order 20-38, which requires individuals to wear masks in specific settings, including health care settings and non-medical congregate settings serving at-risk populations and, in times of medium or high community transmission levels of COVID-19 per CDC's COVID-19 Community Transmission Levels.

   Additionally, individuals should still follow current CDPHE isolation guidance, which includes wearing a mask for 5 days after the initial 5-day isolation period, when in indoor, public settings. Any businesses or facilities that wish to require masks may continue to do so.

   To review statewide orders currently in effect, click here.

COVID-19 VACCINES

2. **Where can I get a vaccine?**
   There are many FREE vaccination locations across Jefferson County, available at www.jeffco.us/vaccinesignup. Additionally, there are numerous vaccine providers throughout the state where you can get a FREE COVID-19 vaccine, no appointment needed. For a list of statewide locations, use the state's vaccine finder.

3. **Why should I get a COVID-19 vaccine?**
   Widespread vaccination is how we are going to transition COVID-19 from a pandemic into an endemic disease. Getting a vaccine will help protect yourself and your loved ones. Once you've been vaccinated, you have the upper hand against the virus, because it means that even if you are exposed, you have a very low risk of getting COVID-19. In the rare instance that you do still contract the virus, it won't be as severe.

   If you have friends or loved ones who are eligible but not yet vaccinated, try talking to them about the importance of getting vaccinated and share why you made the decision to protect yourself and those you care about by getting vaccinated. Ask how you can help, whether that is sharing reliable vaccine information or helping them

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find and get to a COVID-19 vaccination location. People trust those they know and love, and your conversation might make all the difference.

4. **What are current Jefferson County policies regarding vaccines?**
    JCPH has not issued any COVID-19 vaccine requirements for businesses or residents in Jefferson County. We continue to strongly encourage everyone ages six months and older to get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible, so we can transition COVID-19 from a pandemic into an endemic disease.

5. **Where can I access my vaccine card/proof of vaccination?**
    - If you got the COVID-19 vaccine in Colorado, you can get your immunization record through the Colorado Immunization Information System (CIIS) Public Portal. If you have difficulty finding your record, please review this guidance document.
    - Alternatively, if you got the COVID-19 vaccine in Colorado, you can find a digital version of your COVID-19 immunization card through myVaccine Record on the myColorado mobile app.
    - If you got your COVID-19 vaccination(s) outside of Colorado, please contact your vaccination provider or the immunization information system of the state in which you received your COVID-19 to request a copy of your records.

6. **Are COVID-19 vaccines safe?**
    - All authorized COVID-19 vaccines are going through the most intense vaccine safety monitoring in U.S. history.
    - Millions of people in the United States have safely received a vaccine and are now protected from the severe effects of COVID-19.
    - Tens of thousands of people volunteered to help test the vaccines in clinical trials. These clinical trials showed that the vaccines are safe and work well. The vaccines met the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) rigorous scientific standards for safety, effectiveness and quality.
    - Learn more about vaccine safety.
    - Learn more about vaccines currently available.

7. **Is it safe for children to get the vaccine?**
    Yes. Children ages six months and older are recommended to get the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. The Pfizer vaccine for younger children is three doses, and the Moderna vaccine is two doses. Both vaccines went through rigorous clinical trials to make sure they are safe and work well for this younger age group. COVID-19 vaccines can safely be given at the same time as other routine childhood vaccines, like MMR, pertussis and polio.

    While children are less likely to get seriously sick or die from COVID-19 than adults, they are still at risk and can spread the virus to others.

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8. **How do we know COVID-19 vaccines work/are effective?**
Science shows that vaccines are safe and very effective at preventing infections, and even more importantly at preventing the worst outcomes — severe illness, hospitalization or death — for those who do get infected.

According to the [Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE)](#), people who are vaccinated with a booster dose are less likely to get COVID-19, be hospitalized and less likely to die from COVID-19 as compared to those who are unvaccinated. Data supporting the COVID-19 vaccine breakthrough is [updated on a regular basis on CDPHE's website.](#)

9. **How long will it take to be fully immunized after my COVID-19 vaccine?**
It takes two weeks after you've received your last dose to have the best protection from the virus. The exact number of doses needed depends on what type of vaccine you get, your age and whether or not you are [immunocompromised](#).

Staying up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines give you the highest level of protection from severe illness, hospitalization and death. Getting the updated omicron booster gives targeted protection from the COVID-19 variants circulating right now. People who are fully vaccinated may still become infected with COVID-19. However, fully vaccinated people are much more likely to have mild cases of COVID-19 than unvaccinated people.

10. **Are COVID-19 vaccines free?**
Yes, the vaccine is free. Providers should not ask you to pay for the vaccine or other administrative costs, even if you don't have health insurance. If you do have insurance, your provider may seek reimbursement from your health insurance company, but you should not be charged.

11. **Do the vaccines protect against the Omicron variant?**
Two new booster doses, also known as omicron doses or boosters, have been updated to include spike protein components from the Omicron BA.4 and BA.5 variants, which will help ensure better protection from the virus. The boosters are a combined dose of the original vaccine and the new formulation, which is why they are called bivalent.

The omicron doses of both Pfizer and Moderna have been authorized by the [CDC](#) and [FDA](#). The Pfizer bivalent booster is available for people ages 12 and older and the Moderna bivalent booster is available for those 18 and older. The new boosters are currently being evaluated for other pediatric groups, as well.

12. **Do I need to get an additional dose of vaccine if I am already vaccinated?**
A booster of COVID-19 vaccine is strongly recommended for all eligible individuals ages five and older. Children ages five through 11 years who get Pfizer should receive a booster dose of the same type of vaccine at least five months after

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finishing their primary series. Anyone aged 12 years and older should also receive an omicron booster dose at least two months after completing their primary series or receiving their most recent dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Individuals ages 6 months and older who are moderately or severely immunocompromised are recommended to receive three doses of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine as a primary series and an additional updated booster dose at least three (6 months – 11 years of age) or two months (12 years and older) after the last dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

[Find the most current information, including booster eligibility, on JCPH's "Additional Doses & Boosters" webpage.](#)

13. **Can I get the COVID-19 vaccine at the same time as other vaccines, such as the flu vaccine?**
COVID-19 vaccines and other vaccines may be given at the same time. Talk to your doctor about concerns you might have about getting more than one vaccine at the same time.

14. **What's the difference between the four available vaccines?**
   - All four vaccines work very well to prevent you from getting very sick from COVID-19. The more people who get vaccinated, the closer we can get to the end of the pandemic.
   - All authorized COVID-19 vaccines teach your body how to make spike proteins like the ones that cover the COVID-19 virus. Your body learns how to fight the spike protein without having to fight off the full virus. If you are exposed to a person with COVID-19 after vaccination, your body will recognize the spike proteins and remember how to fight them before the virus makes you sick.
   - While all COVID-19 vaccines contain instructions for how to make spike proteins, these instructions are written in different ways. Viral vector vaccines, like the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) vaccine, use a piece of double-stranded DNA to teach your body how to fight COVID-19. mRNA vaccines, like the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, use single-stranded mRNA. Protein-based vaccines, like the Novavax vaccine, contain a small amount of synthetic spike protein as well as an ingredient called adjuvant, which works to boost your immune system – similar to other vaccines we are more familiar with. The goal of every vaccine is the same – they just use a different strategy to achieve that goal.
   - The Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) vaccine only requires one dose. The Pfizer, Moderna and Novavax vaccines require two doses.

15. **What are the potential side effects of COVID-19 vaccines?**

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You may experience mild to moderate side effects after receiving the vaccine. Side effects typically go away on their own after a few days. The most commonly reported side effects are:

- Pain, swelling, and redness at the injection site
- Pain, tenderness and swelling of the lymph nodes in the same arm of the injection
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Chills
- Joint pain
- Nausea/vomiting
- Fever

The process of building immunity can cause symptoms. These symptoms are normal and show that your body's immune system is responding to a vaccine. Other routine vaccines, like the flu vaccine, have similar side effects.

If you experience discomfort after the first dose of the vaccine, it is very important that you still receive the second dose a few weeks later for full protection.

The side effects after the second dose might be more intense or cause more discomfort than side effects after the first dose. In some cases, the side effects may be bad enough to interfere with your work and other normal daily activities for a day or two. Because the body has already responded to one dose of the vaccine, the second dose may cause a stronger immune response in your body. These side effects are expected and show that your body is continuing to build immunity.

If you are experiencing more intense side effects, stay well hydrated, rest and consider over-the-counter medications like acetaminophen or ibuprofen (if they are normally safe for you to take). Side effects are proof that your body is building immunity in response to the vaccine and will typically go away on their own within a day or two.

For in-depth information about the side effects of the vaccines, see the CDC's report on the Pfizer vaccine, Moderna vaccine, Johnson & Johnson vaccine and Novavax vaccine.

16. **Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccine?**
No. The vaccines don't contain the virus that causes COVID-19, and it is not possible to get COVID-19 from a vaccine. You may feel some side effects like fever, chills and fatigue. The current COVID-19 vaccines use temporary pieces of genetic code from the virus to stimulate your body's immune response. This cannot cause COVID-19. The goal of each vaccine is to provide your body with the tools it needs

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to fight the COVID-19 virus if you were to get infected. Learn more about [vaccine side effects](#) and [immunity](#).

17. **Can I get a COVID-19 vaccine if I want to have a baby someday?**
    - Yes. If you are trying to become pregnant now or want to get pregnant in the future, you may get a COVID-19 vaccine.
    - There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 vaccination causes any problems with pregnancy, including the development of the placenta. In addition, there is no evidence that fertility problems are a side effect of any vaccine, including COVID-19 vaccines. People who have received COVID-19 vaccines have gone on to get pregnant and have healthy babies.
    - Like all vaccines, scientists are studying COVID-19 vaccines carefully for side effects now and will continue to study them for many years.
    - Please talk with your doctor for more information if you have any concerns.

18. **Can I get a COVID-19 vaccine if I am pregnant of breastfeeding?**
    Yes. The best way to protect yourself and your baby from COVID-19 is to get vaccinated. There is now more evidence than ever about the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy. The evidence suggests that the benefits of receiving a COVID-19 vaccine outweigh any known or potential risks of vaccination during pregnancy. For more information about the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy, [visit the CDC's website](#).

19. **If I have recovered from COVID-19, do I still need to get vaccinated?**
    Yes. We recommend that you get a vaccine even if you previously had COVID-19. Scientists are still learning more about how long you might be immune after recovering from COVID-19. Early evidence suggests natural immunity from COVID-19 may not last very long in some people, and cases of reinfection have been reported.

    If you had COVID-19, the CDC says you may [wait a few months](#) after your infection before getting the vaccine. It's unlikely that you will get COVID-19 again during this time. However, you may choose to get the vaccine earlier than that as long as you have recovered from your infection.

    If you received a COVID-19-specific antibody treatment (e.g. monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma) while you were sick with COVID-19, you should [wait at least 90 days](#) after receiving the antibody treatment before getting the vaccine.

20. **Can my employer require COVID-19 vaccinations or ask about vaccine status?**
    The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) released new guidance regarding vaccine requirements in the workplace, including whether employers can require their employees to get vaccinated, offer incentives to get vaccinated and ask about vaccination status. Please view the [guidance](#) for more information.

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21. I have a COVID-19 vaccine question that isn't listed here. Where can I go for more information?
CDPHE has an extensive list of answers to frequently asked questions here.

COVID-19 TESTING

22. When should I get tested for COVID-19?
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19, get tested as soon as possible, even if you are vaccinated. Isolate until you know your results. If you test positive, isolate yourself to prevent spreading the virus to others who may not be vaccinated.
- You should also get tested if you have been knowingly exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19 5 days after you were exposed. Quarantine is no longer recommended, but please take precautions including wearing a high-quality mask or respirator (e.g., N95) any time you are around others inside your home or indoors in public. Find where you can pick up an at-home, rapid test.
- Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus, and testing is the most accurate when symptoms are present. Symptoms include:
  - Fever or chills
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  - Fatigue
  - Muscle or body aches
  - Headache
  - New loss of taste or smell
  - Sore throat
  - Congestion or runny nose
  - Nausea or vomiting
  - Diarrhea

23. I'm fully vaccinated. Do I need to get tested for COVID-19 if I have been exposed?
Yes, it is recommended to get a COVID-19 test 5 days after you were exposed and to wear a mask in public for 10 days after exposure.

24. Where can I get tested for COVID-19?
Find a list of FREE locations where you can get tested in Colorado.

QUARANTINE & ISOLATION

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25. **I'm fully vaccinated. Do I need to quarantine if I have been exposed to COVID-19?**

As of August 11, 2022, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention no longer recommends quarantine for people who have been exposed to COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status. However, CDC recommends that people who have been exposed still take precautions to protect others, such as masking around others for 10 days and getting tested five days after exposure.

26. **When should I isolate, and how do I do it?**

If you have tested positive for COVID-19, OR if you develop symptoms, follow isolation instructions. These instructions are for people who have been told to isolate or who are voluntarily isolating due to symptoms. A person's residence is the preferred setting for isolation.

MASKS/FACE COVERINGS

27. **Are masks required in Jefferson County?**

During a public special Jefferson County Board of Health meeting held virtually on February 10, 2022 the Jefferson County Board of Health voted to rescind Public Health Order 21-006, the public health order requiring the use of masks in all public, indoor settings, including school and childcare settings, effective Feb. 11, 2022 at 11:59 p.m.

While the Jefferson County indoor masking PHO expired on Feb. 11, 2022 at 11:59 p.m., any state mask requirements remain in place in the county – such as CDPHE's Public Health Order 20-38, which requires individuals to wear masks in specific settings, including health care settings and non-medical congregate settings serving at-risk populations and, in times of medium or high community transmission levels of COVID-19 per CDC's COVID-19 Community Transmission Levels.

Additionally, individuals should still follow current CDPHE isolation guidance, which includes wearing a mask for 5 days after the initial 5-day isolation period, when in indoor, public settings. Any businesses or facilities that wish to require masks may continue to do so.

To review statewide orders currently in effect, click here.

28. **What science or data supports masking?**

Mask-wearing and vaccination are the two most important tools Coloradans can use to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and bring us closer to ending the pandemic. Many different peer-reviewed studies show that masks help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Masks work by reducing the amount of infectious respiratory particles in

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the air. More studies on masks are being added to the scientific literature every month. For a current review of scientific studies around masking to prevent COVID-19, visit the CDC's Science Brief.

29. **Does masking harm mental health?**
No. While we know that wearing a mask isn't always comfortable, there is no persuasive evidence that masks affect the mental health of adults, children and teens. Read more information about masks and mental health from CDPHE.

30. **Where can I get a mask/face covering?**
You can buy surgical masks online or at many retail stores. The state of Colorado is also providing free surgical masks at certain locations throughout the state.

31. **Should I wear an N95 or KN95 mask?**
Due to the highly infectious nature of the omicron variant, and its widespread presence in Colorado, many public health experts are now recommending the use of N95 or KN95 masks, rather than cloth masks. While these masks are the gold-standard for protection, with higher levels of efficacy than surgical masks (which are more effective than cloth masks), the bottom line is all individuals should wear some form of face covering. The state of Colorado is providing free KN95 masks at certain locations throughout the state.

VARIANTS

32. **What are variants, and how do they emerge?**
If you think about a virus like a tree growing and branching out; each branch on the tree is slightly different than the others. By comparing the branches, scientists can label them according to the differences. These small differences, or variants, have been studied and identified since the beginning of the pandemic. Some variations allow the virus to spread more easily or make it resistant to treatments or vaccines. Those variants must be monitored more carefully.

Variants are expected. The best way to slow the emergence of new variants is to reduce the spread of infection by taking measures to protect yourself including getting a COVID-19 vaccine when available. Learn more from CDC's About Variants webpage.

33. **Is the Omicron variant in Colorado?**
Yes, as of today, the omicron variant is the only variant in Colorado.

34. **How is the Omicron variant different from previous strains?**
According to CDC, omicron spreads more easily than the original COVID-19 virus. Medical researchers are continuing to learn more about omicron. Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect yourself, loved ones, and the community.

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35. **Besides Omicron, are there other variants I should be concerned about?**
The virus that causes COVID-19 is constantly changing, and new variants of the virus are expected to occur. You can view more information about Variants of Concern in the U.S. on CDC's webpage here.

36. **Where can I find the current COVID-19 data for Jeffco?**
Jefferson County Public Health manages a data dashboard that is updated with extensive Jefferson County-specific COVID-19 data every Thursday, including cases, hospitalizations, vaccine coverage and more. View the dashboard on our website at www.jeffco.us/4007/Case-Summary.

37. **Where is data that shows how COVID-19 affects kids?**
Children can get COVID-19 and spread it to others. For more information about COVID-19 by age, view JCPH's data dashboard at www.jeffco.us/4007/Case-Summary.

View CDPHE's state-level data on this topic here. (View the "demographics" section to see data by age).

View CDC's national-level data on this topic here. (You can view "demographic trends" on this page, including information by age).

COVID-19 GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

38. **Where can I find the most updated COVID-19 school guidance?**

JCPH continues to recommend that the best protection against severe complications from COVID-19 and the best approach to maintain in-person learning and childcare is to get vaccinated AND received a booster dose if you are eligible. It is important that all individuals in a school setting understand their own risk and understand the steps to take to protect themselves and others. For more detailed information, see JCPH's full COVID-19 school setting guidance on our website.

39. **What is required for schools in the guidance?**

- Isolation is **required** for those who have tested positive using any diagnostic COVID-19 test for COVID-19 or developed symptoms after a COVID-19 exposure.
  - Those required to isolate must do so for a minimum of 5 days. Day 0 is considered the date of either symptom onset or the date of the positive test collection.
  Earliest eligible return is on day 6 if the person has been fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medication) and

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there has been significant improvement of symptoms.

- JCPH strongly recommends wearing a well-fitted mask for persons aged 3 and older for days 6-10 OR use two negative antigen tests to determine when to end mask use.
- CDPHE **requires** that the school setting must notify JCPH of positive COVID-19 cases.
- **Quarantine update:** As of August 11, 2022, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention no longer recommends quarantine for people who have been exposed to COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status. However, CDC recommends that people who have been exposed still take precautions to protect others, such as masking around others for 10 days and getting tested five days after exposure.

40. **What are recommended best practices for school settings, per the guidance?**
    Guidance to be applied by school settings under their discretion based upon CDC Community Levels and rates of COVID-19 within the school setting:

- Continue to communicate messaging on staying home when sick regardless of a negative COVID-19 test and ensure compliance with facility illness exclusion policies.
- Promote staff and students get vaccinated against COVID-19 and provide opportunities for employees to get vaccinated.
- Strong adherence to personal hygiene, to include frequent hand washing breaks and use of an alcohol base hand sanitizer where appropriate.
- Increase ventilation in spaces to the maximum extent possible.
  - Work with facilities staff to ensure that the building's HVAC system is cycling at least 6 times/hr.
  - Utilize a Box Fan Air Filter.
- Encourage testing on day 6 after a known exposure.
- Notify impacted classes or grades of outbreaks.
- While mask use is no longer required, they are still recommended by the CDC and CDPHE as a measure to reduce the risk of transmission in school settings after an exposure to COVID-19. JCPH endorses this guidance especially in circumstances when a person chooses to wear one or in facilities that choose to continue to require mask use. Persons who are at higher risk for severe outcomes from COVID-19 infection or persons otherwise concerned about being exposed to COVID-19 are especially encouraged to wear a well-fitted mask as well when indoors in school or other public settings. JCPH encourages the use of the CDC community levels as a guide for masking decisions.
- Utilize the CDC Considerations for High-Risk Activities.

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41. How does this guidance help ensure my child can remain in-person for learning?

As the omicron variant continues to spread in our community, Jeffco will continue to see COVID-19 cases in schools, and that may increase the risk of widespread exposures within classrooms. Ensuring that students stay home when sick, practice good hygiene, and get vaccinated, will help reduce exposures and help keep students in schools.

It is important that all individuals in a school setting understand their own risk and understand the steps to take to protect themselves and others. Though this guidance is written for COVID-19, many of the layered mitigation measures can also help to prevent the spread of other infectious diseases.