

COVID-19 Vaccine Recommendations

Dear Patient,

We recognize the COVID-19 pandemic has brought many challenges and concerns over this past year, but now there is excitement about the availability of the COVID-19 vaccines. We know you have many questions, so we would like to provide you with information.

Emory Transplant Center leadership recommends that you receive the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available to you.

As a transplant patient, weighing the risks and benefits of getting vaccinated is important. Below are several points we want you to be aware of regarding COVID-19 vaccines:

- To date, transplant recipients appear to have worse outcomes when contracting COVID-19 compared to non-transplants patients with COVID-19. Therefore, receiving COVID-19 vaccination is important for transplant patients to avoid a risk of disease, long-term complications and death.
- The approved Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have reported effectiveness of 94-95%. Both vaccines are mRNA-based and are not live viruses.
- The mRNA vaccines' safety and effectiveness are still under investigation in solid organ transplant recipients, who were not included in the early studies. But based on previous vaccination guidelines for transplant patients, our doctors believe the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are safe and will benefit our immunosuppressed transplant recipients.
- Emory Transplant Center also recommends that you take Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine if it becomes available to you. Similar to the Pfizer and Moderna versions, the Johnson & Johnson vaccine has not been studied in the transplant population yet.
- Some future vaccines, which are not yet approved for use, may be weakened or attenuated live viruses. You should avoid these. We are currently advising the use of only the Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines for our transplant patients.
- **Heart and lung transplant patients** should have their transplant antibody levels checked before receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. Call your transplant team **BEFORE** scheduling your first dose.
- Vaccination is discouraged for organ recipients within the first three months of transplant or for those who have ongoing issues with rejection.
- If you have recently received other vaccines (influenza, shingles, etc.), you should wait one month before receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

VACCINE APPOINTMENTS

You can request a vaccination appointment via the Emory Healthcare webform posted on the website at emoryhealthcare.org/covidvaccine. Completing this form will place you on our waitlist, which Emory Healthcare will work through on a first-come, first-served process. When appointment time slots become available based on vaccine supply, patients will be contacted with instructions about how to make their appointment.

All COVID-19 vaccinations are by appointment only. Individual physician offices, including all Emory Transplant Center locations, will not have the vaccine and will not be able to schedule vaccinations

Due to the high demand for the vaccine, it may take time (days or weeks, depending on vaccine supply) before we can contact you. The second vaccine dose will be scheduled after administration of the first dose.

VACCINE DISTRIBUTION

Please note, we are following the Georgia Department of Public Health's vaccine distribution plan. Please visit the Georgia Department of Public Health website for the latest update at dph.georgia.gov/covid-vaccine.

To most efficiently address questions, we are regularly updating the website for answers to frequently asked questions about the COVID-19 vaccine at Emory Healthcare. Before calling us, please visit emoryhealthcare.org/covidvaccine.

In the meantime, please continue to follow best practices: minimize going out in public; wear a mask when out of the house; and clean your hands frequently with sanitizer or soap and water.

Continue to stay safe. You and your health and safety are very important to us.

Sincerely,

Thomas C. Pearson, MD, DPhil
Executive Director, Emory Transplant Center