

Consonus is close to a very important milestone. By mid-March we will have completed all matched facility vaccine clinics plus additional communities that otherwise would not have had a path to get their seniors vaccinated! As we all navigate the next phase of vaccine continuity together, it is important to celebrate the accomplishment to date. We have completed over **50,000 vaccines** to seniors and staff in long term care. Having residents and staff fully vaccinated is a key step on the road to recovery and to maintain the reduction in COVID positivity rates. As we approach this milestone, these are some common questions:

Q: How long will the COVID vaccine protection last?

A: We still don't know. While mRNA COVID-19 vaccines have demonstrated high efficacy at preventing severe and symptomatic disease, there is currently limited information on how much the vaccines might reduce transmission and how long protection lasts. The studies to inform us are ongoing and the CDC will keep the public informed as new evidence becomes available.

Q: Do the vaccines protect against the emerging coronavirus variants?

A: Yes. Evidence so far suggests that the two Covid-19 vaccines authorized in the U.S., from Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech, appear to offer good protection against new variants circulating in the US. FDA will continue to require drug developers to study their vaccines' efficacy against emerging strains and ensuring they are prepared to adapt quickly and modify the vaccines as the virus mutates.

Q: What precautions must remain in place for fully vaccinated persons?

A: At this time, vaccinated persons should continue to follow current public health guidance to protect themselves and others, including wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet away from others, avoiding crowds, avoiding poorly ventilated spaces, covering coughs and sneezes, washing hands often and following CDC guidance related to personal protective equipment use or SARS-CoV-2 testing.

Q: Will being fully vaccinated protect me from getting sick with COVID-19?

A: Yes. Vaccination works by teaching your immune system how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19, and this protects you from getting sick with COVID-19. The vaccines available now are 95% protective at preventing severe and symptomatic cases. If a fully vaccinated individual is exposed to COVID-19 and develops symptoms, they should be clinically evaluated for COVID-19, including SARS-CoV-2 testing, if indicated.

Q: After getting a COVID-19 vaccine, will I test positive for COVID-19 on a viral test?

A: No. Prior receipt of an mRNA vaccine will not affect the results of SARS-CoV-2 viral tests or cause you to test positive.

If your body develops an immune response—the goal of vaccination—there is a possibility you may test positive on some antibody tests. Antibody tests indicate you had a previous infection and that you may have some level of protection against the virus. Experts are currently looking at how COVID-19 vaccination may affect antibody testing results. Antibody testing is not currently recommended to assess for immunity to COVID-19 following mRNA COVID-19 vaccination or to assess the need for vaccination in an unvaccinated person.

Q: Knowing that a fully vaccinated staff is critical to keeping positivity rates low, what are some best approaches and resources to promote vaccine uptake?

A: Providing a heavy emphasis on education that is tailored to the needs of your facility and the populations you serve is key. Having the education delivered by the right respected messengers to the right audience is important. People act when they trust the messenger, the message, and their motivations. Consider providing an abundance of communications in multiple formats, such as written, video, text alerts, web postings and live virtual meetings. For those still hesitant, consider one on one meetings to address specific concerns. Engage leaders and encourage role modeling by posting videos of vaccinations on your facility's web page, intranet or on social media and create a celebratory atmosphere around getting the vaccine. Below are some links to trusted resources to promote confidence, communication, and uptake of COVID-19 vaccine.

Consonus and Marquis COVID-19 Confidence Builder Toolkit #GetVaccinated
<https://www.consonushealth.com/covid-19-general-updates/>

CDC's Long-Term Care Facility Toolkit: Preparing for COVID-19 Vaccination at Your Facility <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/toolkits/long-term-care/index.html>

Q: How can we ensure our facility has continued access to COVID-19 vaccine after the Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program is over?

A: Consonus will be participating in the Federal vaccine continuity program. This was introduced in the Consonus webinar on February 19th that was recorded. There will be a follow-up webinar on March 5th with the latest information around this new program for LTC. Please view our website for the latest information.