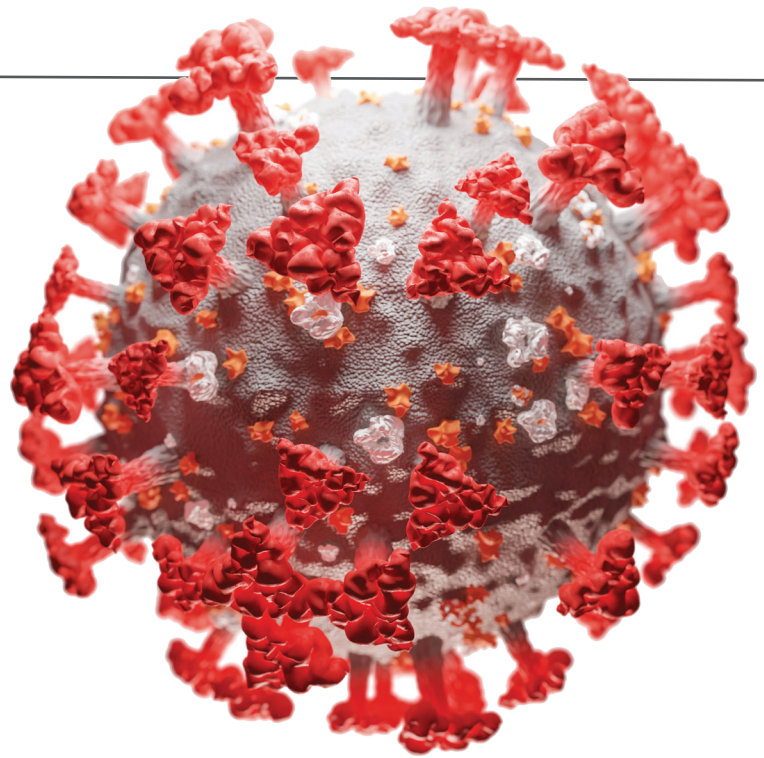


Check Up

CCA Magazine

COVID-19 Issue #4

VACCINE EDITION



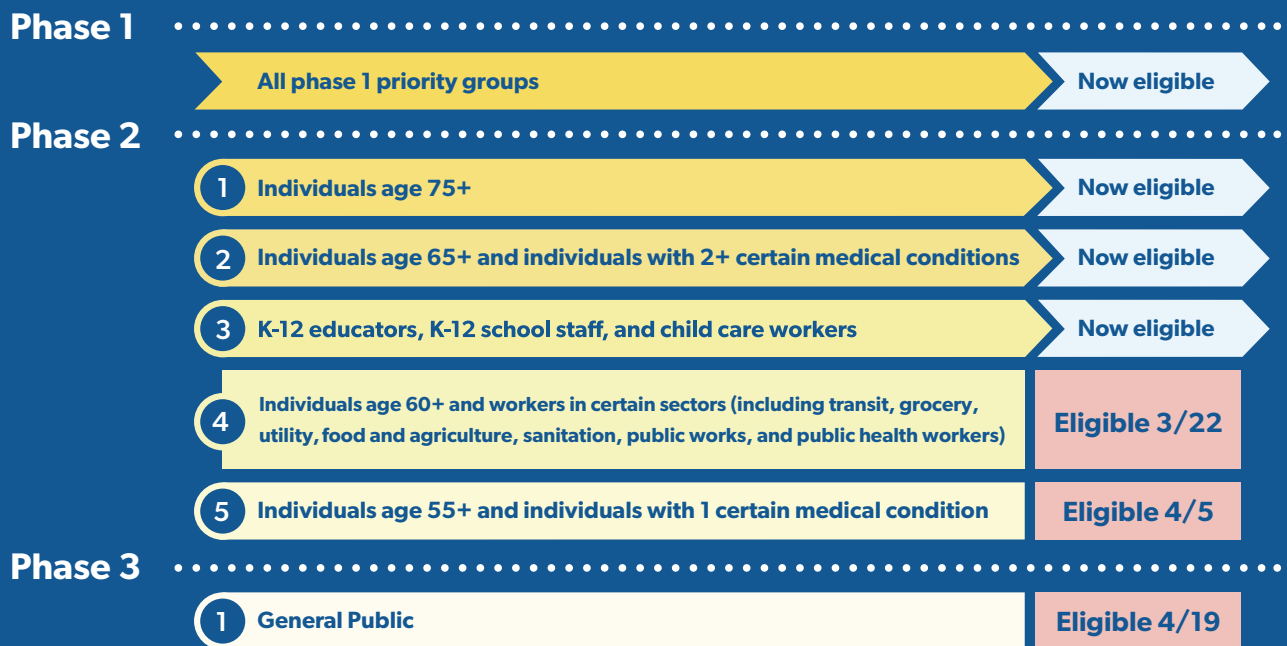
What's Inside

- Our experts answer your most pressing vaccine questions
- Learn how to book your appointment
- Spot and avoid vaccine scams
- Find trusted support in your community
- **Plus!** A CCA member and doctor share their personal experiences with the vaccine

Protect Yourself and Your Community with the COVID-19 Vaccine

Massachusetts has begun to safely distribute the COVID-19 vaccines. The state is using a phased approach to decide when different groups of people will get the vaccine. All people in Phase 1 can now be vaccinated. Some people in Phase 2 can also get vaccinated.

COVID-19 Vaccination in MA: Eligibility Status



Update 3/17/21

Please visit www.Mass.gov/COVIDvaccine for the latest timeline.

How to Book a Vaccine Appointment When You're Eligible

Demand is high and vaccine supply is low. You may need to wait for an appointment.



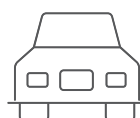
Visit vaxfinder.mass.gov to find a location and available appointments at some sites.



If you have trouble accessing or using the internet, call us at **866-610-2273 (TTY 711)**, 8 am to 8 pm, 7 days a week.



Look for notices from your primary care office. Not all offices have vaccines.



If you need a ride to or from your vaccine appointment, we can help. Call **855-204-1410 (TTY 711)**.

Meet Dr. Wayne Saltsman, CCA Senior Medical Director

Dr. Saltsman trusts science. But he also knows that there are a lot of mixed messages around the COVID-19 vaccines. To stay informed, he gets information from trusted sources and talks to his colleagues.

“**When I heard something about the vaccines that didn't seem accurate, I turned to reliable sources for the truth.**”

One concern people have about the vaccines is that they were developed too quickly. Dr. Saltsman credits medical advancements for the speed and safety of the vaccines. “We have tools and technology today that allow us to create vaccines faster, and more efficiently and safely.”

Dr. Saltsman received both of his COVID-19 vaccines and today he feels great. After his first shot, he did feel tired and had some soreness in his arm. After his second shot, he had mild flu-like symptoms. It was safe for him to take ibuprofen, and his symptoms resolved after a couple of hours. Most people have minimal side effects, and they usually go away after 24 to 36 hours.

“It's important to understand that the side effects aren't a sign that you're getting sick,” he says. “Your body is creating a response to fight COVID-19 if you get infected down the road.”



Stay Safest at Home

Experts are still learning about the protection that the COVID-19 vaccine provides. Older people and people with long-term health problems are still at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19. The best way to keep yourself and others safe is to stay home.

- **Get the supplies you need to stay home, like food and medications.** Talk to your care partner if you're having issues getting what you need.
- **Keep up with the appointments you need** and stay in contact with your providers.
- **Call the CCA 24-hour Nurse Advice Call Line if you have an urgent health concern: 866-610-2274 (TTY 711) and press 3.**



Get the Facts

We know people have many questions about the COVID-19 vaccine. Our experts answered your most pressing questions. Remember, information is changing quickly. You can find the latest updates and more answers like these on the CCA website:

www.commonwealthcarealliance.org/members/covid-19



Q Can the COVID-19 vaccine give me COVID-19?

A No. The COVID-19 vaccines approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) do not contain the live virus that causes COVID-19. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines use messenger RNA or mRNA. The Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine uses a harmless version of a different virus, called a vector. Both mRNA and viral vectors trigger a response in the body to fight off COVID-19. The mRNA vaccines require two doses. The J&J vaccine requires one.

Q Will the vaccine protect against all strains of COVID-19?

A It is normal for viruses to change as they spread. Scientists are working to learn more about these new COVID-19 “variants” you may hear about. There is more to understand about how easily they spread and whether the vaccines we have will protect against them.

Q Is it possible to get a milder form of COVID-19 than I would if I did not get vaccinated?

A The experts believe that the vaccine may help keep you from getting seriously ill even if you do get COVID-19. Until we know more, it is important to continue wearing masks and practicing social distancing, even after you are vaccinated.

Q How safe is the vaccine if I have diseases such as diabetes or COPD? What if I am overweight?

A The FDA found that the vaccine is safe and effective for use in people with multiple diseases, as well as those who are overweight. If you have concerns about the vaccine and your specific health needs, your primary care provider can help. You can also ask your care partner for more information.

Q Are there any side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine?

A Side effects are normal signs that your body is building protection. Not everyone will have side effects from the vaccines. Side effects can be different for each person and can vary based on which vaccine you're given.

Common examples of side effects include: sore arm, tiredness, headache, muscle aches, and sometimes low-grade fever. Most side effects are mild, and they go away after a few days. If you do have side effects that worry you after receiving your first or second vaccine, call your primary care provider to discuss how you are feeling.

Q Should I be worried about taking the vaccine too soon?

A Although the COVID-19 vaccines were created in record time, the FDA has assured that no corners were cut. The mRNA vaccines are a new type of vaccine, but they have been studied for decades. mRNA has been successfully used in many areas of healthcare. And viral vectors, as used in the J&J vaccine, have been used by scientists to make other vaccines. All three vaccines were held to the same tough standards as other types of vaccines, like the flu shot. They were all proven safe and effective in preventing serious illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19.

Q How long does it take for me to be protected?

A The vaccine trials showed that it takes a few weeks for your body to begin creating antibodies. Antibodies start the process of getting rid of invaders, like COVID-19, that may cause infection. It's possible to be infected with the virus just before or just after your vaccination. This is because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection.

CCA wants you to get the most out of your vaccine. If you are getting the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, schedule your second shot when you get your first shot. It is important that you remember to get your booster shot so you get the best protection.

Do you have other general COVID-19 vaccine questions?

Email questions to covidquestions@commonwealthcare.org or leave a message at 888-377-7901. We will review the questions we receive, and update information posted on the CCA website.



Making an Informed Choice About the Vaccine



If you have questions or concerns about the COVID-19 vaccines, you are not alone. While we hope that this newsletter answers some of your questions, we also know there is a lot of information—and misinformation—being shared daily from many sources. It can be hard to stay current on all the COVID-19 changes as they happen.

It's normal to feel hesitant about getting a new vaccine. To make an informed decision, it's important to get your questions answered. **First, identify trusted resources in your community that you can talk to about your concerns:**

- Think of people and places that make you feel safe and comfortable. Asking your primary care doctor or pharmacist is a great first step.
- Find leaders within your community that share information you can trust. Below is a list of local organizations that could help.
- Talk to people you can be honest with and who care about your wellbeing.

Then, ask as many questions as you need to decide if getting the vaccine is right for you.

If you are finding it hard to get information about the vaccine in your preferred language or format, call us. We can help. Remember, your CCA care team is always here to answer questions or connect you to the right resources in your community.

Community-based organizations

ABCD	Greater Boston	617-348-6000
Brockton Neighborhood Health Center	Brockton	508-559-6699
Codman Square Health Center	Dorchester	617-822-8271
Dimock Health Center	Roxbury	617-442-8800
Family Resource Centers	Statewide	By location
Lowell Community Health Center	Lowell	978-937-9700
My Brother's Table	Lynn	781-595-3224
New North Citizens Council	Hampden County	413-746-4885

Member Spotlight: Meet Bobbie

“ This pandemic is not a play toy. Anything that can help keep me and everyone else safe, I’m here for it. ”

Senior Care Options member Bobbie is in his late 70s and joined CCA in 2013 after learning about it from a friend. He has several chronic conditions, including COPD, which is a lung disease, and kidney failure. He goes to dialysis to do the things his kidneys can’t, like remove waste and extra water from his body. He learned about the COVID-19 vaccine one day while he was getting dialysis. An employee at the clinic came around with information about the vaccine and asked if he was interested. He read the information first before agreeing to get the shot. Bobbie got his first shot in mid-January and his second shot a month later.



“ This was a precaution to hopefully keep me from getting COVID-19. If it’s going to help me, I’m all for it. ”

Bobbie felt well-informed about the vaccine and the possible risks. “They are very cautious at the clinic, and I had a lot of faith in them,” he says. He had some pain where he got the shot, but it went away in about a day.

Bobbie still wears a mask when he goes out and avoids crowds. But he felt confident enough about the vaccine that he has recommended it to people he knows. “I tell everyone that I got the shot. If you have a place to go and get it, what are you waiting for?”

The Member Support Program is Back for 2021

CCA launched the Member Support Program to help members cover the cost of basic needs during COVID-19. In 2020, thousands of CCA members used the program to order food, household products, over-the-counter medications, and personal care items.

This year, you can again get up to \$100 to buy items you need through our partner, NationsOTC. To learn about available items and place your order:

Visit www.CCAgives.com or

Call **877-237-8350 (TTY 711)**, 8 am to 8 pm, Monday to Friday

All products are shipped directly to your home free of charge.
Be sure to use your \$100 credit before June 30, 2021.





Watch Out for Vaccine Scams

Scammers are using the COVID-19 vaccines to take advantage of people. They may try to sell you the vaccine or offer you early access. They might ask for payment or for your sensitive information—like your Medicare ID, CCA member ID, bank account, credit card, or Social Security number. Remember these tips:

- 1 Don't respond to messages promising the vaccine in exchange for payment.** Rely on trusted sources, like your healthcare providers. COVID-19 vaccines are free.
- 2 Don't click on links from sources you don't know.** They could download viruses on your device.
- 3 Don't give personal information without confirming the person's identity, organization, and if their request is valid.**
- 4 Don't trust a name or telephone number.** Scammers often use official-sounding names and spoof phone numbers and email addresses to make you trust them.
- 5 Ask questions and for information in writing that you can verify.**

Always give yourself time to think before giving out your personal information or money.