

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions: Participants and Caregivers **LAST UPDATED Feb. 22, 2022**

➤ **Will InnovAge staff be vaccinated?**

InnovAge's priority is the health and safety of our participants and staff. As a healthcare company caring for frail older adults, InnovAge requires all employees and contractors to be up-to-date on COVID-19 vaccinations. This means securing a COVID-19 booster and 14 days have passed since receiving the booster. We must also comply with state and local vaccine mandates for healthcare personnel in the communities in which we operate.

➤ **I want to be sure that whoever is coming to my house or visiting my loved one has been vaccinated. Can you tell me if that's the case?**

As a healthcare company caring for frail older adults, InnovAge requires all employees and contractors to be up-to-date on COVID-19 vaccinations. We must also comply with state and local vaccine mandates for healthcare personnel in the communities in which we operate. As we have been doing throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, InnovAge does not send any staff into participant homes if the staff have any signs or symptoms of COVID-19. In addition, staff are required to wear N95 face masks and use other personal protective equipment (PPE) as needed when interacting with participants.

➤ **Will InnovAge be giving a booster shot to participants?**

Yes. InnovAge PACE | LIFE centers will arrange booster vaccinations for participants. Please check with your center for information.

➤ **How close can booster shots be given to the influenza vaccine?**

InnovAge care teams will be sure to administer booster shots and the annual influenza vaccine in the right sequence and spacing according to each participant's care plan and medical history. We are administering the annual influenza shots now.

➤ **With infection rates in many areas increasing due to the Omicron variant, will centers need to close again?**

InnovAge's primary objective is the safety and health of everyone. We continue to monitor both internal and external metrics related to infection rates and positive cases in the community. Please note that while having COVID-19 exposures in a center will require a review to assess impact to staff and participants, it does not necessarily mean we will close the center. It is critical we continue to provide care for our participants as are many of our partner hospitals and specialty providers.

➤ **Now that most InnovAge participants and staff are vaccinated, can we stop wearing masks in the centers?**

No, we are still in a pandemic and our priority is the health and safety of all participants and staff. CDC guidance requires everyone continue to wear masks and follow all other safety guidelines in the centers. InnovAge staff will continue to be required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when caring for participants and when out in the community.

TIMING AND LOGISTICS

➤ **Will all participants be required to be vaccinated?**

We strongly recommend InnovAge participants be vaccinated for COVID-19, including receiving boosters. Participants must provide written consent for COVID-19 vaccine, just as they do for the flu or any other vaccine.

COMMON VACCINE QUESTIONS

➤ **How do vaccines work?**

Vaccines work by causing your body to develop an immune response. Each time your body is exposed to either a vaccine (or virus) it creates antibodies to help fight off the infection and develops immune “memory” to help fight off future infections. This immune response gets stronger each time the body comes in contact with the virus or vaccine, which is why many vaccines require at least two doses.

➤ **What types of vaccines are there for COVID-19?**

Most of the COVID-19 vaccine types are just like the ones you received during childhood. The goal is to put a non-active version of the virus or some of the virus parts (that cannot infect you) into your body so that your body develops antibodies to help fight the virus in the future. Newer types of vaccines are being tried for COVID-19 using only small parts of the virus (such as mRNA) to create an immune response; these small parts cannot infect you.

➤ **How effective are they?**

Randomized clinical trials of vaccines that have received an Emergency Use Authorization in the United States showed efficacy of 94% to 95% in preventing COVID-19–associated illness:

- Pfizer ~ 95% effective at preventing infection in people 16 years and older
- Moderna ~ 94% effective at preventing infection in those age 18 and above
- J&J/Janssen ~ 66.3% effective in clinical trials at preventing laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 illness in people who had no evidence of prior infection
- Two doses of AstraZeneca ~ 74.5% effective at preventing symptomatic COVID-19 infections

For comparison, the annual flu shot is usually 40% to 50% effective.

- **What are the side effects?**
Side effects are rare but can include muscle aches and 1-2 days of a fever.
- **If I experience the side effects, does this mean that I have COVID-19?**
No. Side effects indicate that the vaccine is working and that it has triggered an immune response. They are a good indication your body is reacting to the vaccine. That said, if you don't have any side effects, it doesn't mean the vaccine is any less effective.
- **Is the COVID-19 vaccine an annual vaccination, like the flu?**
It's unclear how long the vaccines will provide protective immunization.
- **What if I already had COVID-19? Do I still need to receive the vaccine?**
The CDC still recommends that individuals get the vaccine, even if they have previously had COVID-19.
- **Can I get infected with COVID-19 and spread it if I have received the vaccine?**
Yes, you can be a carrier of COVID-19 if you are vaccinated. While your symptoms may be less, you can still get sick and spread the virus to others. This is why it is important to be fully vaccinated, continue wearing a mask, physically distance, and regularly wash your hands.
- **Do I need to wear a mask when I receive a COVID-19 vaccine?**
Yes. CDC recommends that during the pandemic people wear a mask that covers their nose and mouth when in contact with others outside your household, when in healthcare facilities, and when receiving any vaccine, including a COVID-19 vaccine.
- **Does immunity after getting COVID-19 last longer than protection from COVID-19 vaccines?**
The protection someone gains from having an infection (called natural immunity) varies depending on the virus, and it varies from person to person. We do not know how long natural immunity might last from COVID-19. It's also unclear how long the vaccines will provide protective immunization. It could range from one season (like the flu vaccine) to a lifetime (like measles).
- **What is InnovAge doing to ensure facilities are safe for participants?**
InnovAge's primary focus is keeping our participants safe and healthy. We are taking a number of steps, including:
 - Screening participants about their health and how they are feeling before their appointment
 - Checking everyone's temperature (staff and participants) when they arrive at a center

- Building modifications, such as plexiglass barriers, upgraded HVAC filters, and floor arrows and signs to signal one-way walking
- Use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Frequent sanitizing of surfaces
- Mask-wearing by everyone while in an InnovAge bus or center
- Supporting physical distancing by
 - Keeping participants in one exam room
 - Limiting capacity on the buses
 - Limiting the number of people within the centers at any one time
- Re-training all of our staff on COVID-19 safety and infection controls.

➤ **How did InnovAge reopen its PACE and LIFE centers?**

InnovAge centers reopened in phases.

- The first phase involved participants whose individual care plans call for hands-on clinical care, dental services, or rehabilitation. These center visits are being conducted by appointment. Social activities will not be offered in the centers in this first phase.
- In the next phases, more participants and services are brought back to your center. Our teams will closely monitor local virus trends and center operations to determine when a center can safely move to the next phase.
- Participants who do not require services at their center in the first phase of reopening will continue to be cared for as you are now. This includes wellness calls, meal delivery, medication delivery, telehealth visits, personal care assistance, and other services currently provided.

➤ **How did you proceed with reopening?**

After a few weeks of having appointment-only attendance, and if infection rates continued to be low, InnovAge increased the number of participants in centers. One half-day of center attendance was added for certain participants. Additional increases in center attendance will happen only if local community infection rates continue to decrease. We will still limit the number of people coming into centers to allow for physical distancing, and everyone will be required to wear masks while in the center.

➤ **Which participants will be brought back to the center first?**

The decision to bring back participants will be made by the interdisciplinary team based on each participant's care plan and medical needs.

- **If participants are uneasy about returning to the center, will services continue as they have been since COVID-19 started?**

Yes, InnovAge will continue providing wellness calls, meal delivery, medication delivery, telehealth visits, personal care assistance, and other services currently provided.

TESTING AND INFECTION CONTROL

- **Are you testing participants for COVID-19?**

Yes, we are able to test participants if their symptoms indicate a need for it.

- **Are you doing testing on-site?**

Yes, we have COVID-19 testing capabilities on-site at all centers. We are also testing participants at their homes or skilled facilities if warranted.

- **Are you providing at-home COVID-19 tests to participants?**

Participants who wish to use at-home COVID-19 tests are encouraged to check the [CDC website](#) for information on using these tests. The CDC site includes information [to order free at-home tests](#).

- **Will participants be screened before getting on the InnovAge bus and/or coming to the center?**

Yes. Participants with scheduled appointments at the center will be called either the night before the appointment or the day of the appointment and asked a series of screening questions. Everyone coming to the center (staff and participants) will complete the screening questionnaire and have their temperature taken before entering the center.

- **Will InnovAge give participants masks to wear outside of our homes?**

Yes. InnovAge has provided each participant with disposable masks along with a reusable face mask. We will continue to share supplies with participants as long as they are available.

PARTICIPANT SERVICES

- **How is InnovAge providing medical care?**

Our staff continues to coordinate care and support for participants through telehealth, home visits, wellness calls, and other services. This includes meals, supplies, medication deliveries, as well as specialty appointments and other treatments. We continue to provide care and services in the safest way possible and according to individualized care plans.

TELEHEALTH

➤ **Is InnovAge still using telehealth?**

Yes. Even with our centers fully reopen, we continue to offer telehealth services.

➤ **Do InnovAge participants need to provide consent to receive telehealth services?**

Yes. InnovAge will follow all state laws regarding obtaining written or verbal consent. If you have questions about telehealth services, please contact your local center.

➤ **Some participants don't want to sign the consent or participate in telehealth. They find it stressful and would like to do it over the phone. What is your response?**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services requires us to obtain participant consent and is allowing us to do that through verbal consent for telehealth visits. Participants have the right to refuse and not consent to telehealth services, but we think this is an important service at this time and would encourage all participants to provide their consent. Participant confidentiality remains secure. A telehealth visit is like going in to see your doctor, only you are meeting through video instead of being together physically.

➤ **If my loved one – an InnovAge participant – is not feeling well, what should I do?**

InnovAge participants who are not feeling well should contact their PACE | LIFE center's clinical team.

➤ **Are there any specific steps you're taking for the seniors for whom you provide home care and go into their homes?**

All InnovAge staff are required to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19. Staff who have in-person interaction with a participant are required to wear an N95 mask. We also require staff to follow guidance on the use of N95s and other personal protective equipment (PPE) to provide the maximal protection and safety for all participants and staff.

➤ **What kind of plan does InnovAge have in place for caring for participants with COVID-19?**

InnovAge has a detailed control plan that outlines specific actions to ensure the safety of our participants and staff. In addition, we follow all local, state, and federal guidance around COVID-19.

- **Are there any plans to provide dental hygiene and other on-site medical services under the current circumstances?**

Care teams are able to provide services such as dental, hearing, and vision if they are determined to be necessary in individualized care plans. These will be provided at the participant's home or at a contracted care facility if staff are allowed to enter the facility, and if we are not able to provide them in the centers.

MENTAL HEALTH

- **What is being done for participants who may be having mental health issues due to isolation?**

InnovAge's therapists, doctors, social workers, and behavioral health case managers are in contact with participants to assess and address mental health status. In addition, wellness calls include prompts to encourage participants to be open about their concerns in this area. To help combat isolation, we are providing virtual services such as activity kits, Zoom activities and classes, and more. These are designed to help keep participants engaged and active.