

## **Overall Society Statement on Vaccination**

Vaccination against COVID-19 is critical for public safety and, especially, the safety of the most vulnerable among us. Get your vaccine as soon as it is available to you. If you have MS, visit [nationalMSSociety.org/covid19](https://nationalMSSociety.org/covid19) to learn the latest about COVID-19 vaccines and MS.

### **COVID-19 mRNA vaccine guidance for people living with MS**

People living with multiple sclerosis (MS) are seeking peace of mind on the safety and effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines. In response, the Society convened a group of expert researchers and medical professionals to review the available science and make fact-based recommendations.

We do not know how many people in the vaccine clinical trials had MS, so data on the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines in those with MS is not yet available. Our guidance is based on data from the general population in the vaccine clinical trials and data from studies of other vaccines in MS. Our guidance will be updated and become more detailed as more is learned from scientific studies of the vaccines.

**This guidance only applies to the approved mRNA vaccines in the United States, Pfizer BioNTech and Moderna. As there are different vaccines available in other countries, this guidance may not apply to those living outside of the US.**

### **People with MS should get a COVID-19 vaccine**

The science has shown us that the COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. Like other medical decisions, the decision to get a vaccine is best made in partnership with your healthcare provider. Most people with relapsing and progressive forms of MS should be vaccinated. The risks of COVID-19 disease outweigh any potential risks from the vaccine. In addition, members of the same household and close contacts should also get a COVID-19 vaccine when available to decrease the impact of the virus.

People with progressive MS, those who are older, those who have a higher level of physical disability, those with certain medical conditions (e.g., diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, heart and lung disease, pregnancy), and Black and Hispanic populations are among groups with the highest risk for hospitalization due to COVID-19. Individuals in these high risk groups are especially encouraged to get the vaccine as soon as it becomes [available to you](#).

These COVID-19 vaccines require two doses. You need to get both doses for it to work. If you've had COVID-19 and recovered, you should also get the vaccine. We don't know how long someone is protected from getting COVID-19 again.

### **The COVID-19 vaccines are safe for people with MS**

The vaccines do not contain live virus and will not cause COVID-19 disease. The vaccines are not likely to trigger an MS relapse or to worsen your chronic MS symptoms. The risk of getting COVID-19 far outweighs any risk of having an MS relapse from the vaccine.

Any vaccine can cause side effects, including a fever. A fever can make your MS symptoms worse temporarily, but they should return to prior levels after the fever is gone. Even if you have side effects, it's important to get the second dose of the vaccine for it to be effective.

## **The vaccines are safe to use with MS medications**

Continue your disease modifying therapy (DMT) unless you are advised by your MS healthcare provider to stop or delay it. Stopping some DMTs abruptly can cause severe increase in disability with new lesions on MRI. Based on data from previous studies of other vaccines and DMTs, getting the COVID-19 vaccine while on any DMT is safe. Some DMTs may make the vaccine less effective but it will still provide some protection. For those taking Kesimpta, Lemtrada, Mavendad, Ocrevus, or Rituxan—you may need to coordinate the timing of your vaccine with the timing of your DMT dose. Work with your MS healthcare provider to determine the best schedule for you. We are in the process of developing considerations for providers to use when making these decisions with you.

## **All of us have a personal responsibility to slow the spread of the pandemic and eliminate the virus as quickly as possible**

The authorization of safe and effective vaccines for COVID-19 bring us one step closer to eliminating this pandemic. In addition to getting vaccinated, the science is settled that wearing a face mask, social distancing and washing your hands are the best ways to slow the spread of the virus and should be continued even if you get a COVID-19 vaccine.

**Learn more about the safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)**

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**This guidance is endorsed by the Consortium of MS Centers and the MS Coalition members:**

Accelerated Cure Project for Multiple Sclerosis ([www.acceleratedcure.org](http://www.acceleratedcure.org))

Can Do Multiple Sclerosis ([www.mscando.org](http://www.mscando.org))

Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers ([www.mscares.org](http://www.mscares.org))

International Organization of Multiple Sclerosis Nurses ([www.iomsn.org](http://www.iomsn.org))

MS Views and News ([www.msviewsandnews.org](http://www.msviewsandnews.org))

Multiple Sclerosis Association of America ([www.mymsaa.org](http://www.mymsaa.org))

Multiple Sclerosis Foundation ([www.msfocus.org](http://www.msfocus.org))

National Multiple Sclerosis Society ([www.nmss.org](http://www.nmss.org))

United Spinal Association ([www.unitedspinal.org](http://www.unitedspinal.org))