



Return-to-Activities FAQs

Be sure to read through all the Return-to-Activities protocols on our website linked [here](#). If your question is still not answered in the FAQ below, please contact rta@sowa.org for more information.

COVID-19 Vaccination Information

Are participants (athletes, coaches, Unified partners, etc.) required to be vaccinated/show proof of vaccination prior to returning to activities?

At this time, we are not requiring you to get the COVID-19 vaccine. However, we are strongly encouraging everyone to get vaccinated to keep safe and save lives. People with ID are a high-risk group for COVID-19 illness, complications and death.

Can participation be denied if an athlete, Unified partner or coach is not vaccinated?

No. Currently, Special Olympics does not require vaccination for participation.

Can teams or programs require participants to be vaccinated to participate?

No. If coaches or coordinators are not comfortable with coaching participants who may not be vaccinated, coaches should reconsider participation.

Can coaches ask if athletes are/are not vaccinated?

By agreeing to coach this season you understand that some of the athletes may or may not be vaccinated. It is not appropriate to ask whether participants have or have not been vaccinated as that does not determine their participation.

Are any modifications being made to the Return-to-Activities Protocol considering the vaccines?

No, it is too early in the vaccine process to make a modification to the Return to Play Protocol. Special Olympics requires that all delegations continue to follow the Return-to-Activities Protocols.

If I get vaccinated, do I have to follow Return-to-Play protocols (wearing a mask, filling out a waiver, social distancing, hand washing)?

Yes, Special Olympics will require all participants to follow Return-to-Activities Protocols.

What is the COVID-19 vaccine?

A COVID-19 vaccine protects you from COVID-19. Vaccines work with your body's natural defenses so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed (also called immunity).

Should I get vaccinated for COVID-19?

Yes. Special Olympics strongly encourages everyone who has access to the COVID-19 vaccine, to get vaccinated. The vaccine will help protect you from getting COVID-19. If you still get infected after you get vaccinated, the vaccine works to prevent serious illness. By getting vaccinated, you also help protect people around you.

What if I have already had COVID-19? Should I still get the vaccine?

Yes. We don't know yet if people are protected from getting COVID-19 after they have had it. We do not know yet how long people are protected from COVID-19 after they have had it. More studies are needed to better understand this.

Why is it important for people with ID to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

People with ID are at higher risk of getting and dying of COVID-19 than the general population. The vaccine helps to reduce the risk of serious disease and death.

Do not get the vaccine right now if:

- You currently have COVID-19. You will need to wait until it has been 4 weeks since you noticed first symptoms or tested positive.
- You have a fever (temperature of 100.4 F/38 C degrees or higher). Wait until you feel better.
- You have a serious allergic reaction to any of the ingredients in the vaccine. Or you have had a serious allergic reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine

Does Special Olympics require me to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

At this time, we are not requiring you to get the COVID-19 vaccine. However, we are strongly encouraging everyone to get vaccinated to keep safe and save lives. People with ID are a high-risk group for COVID-19 illness, complications and death. We are working hard to help get access to the vaccine around the world.

Are any modifications being made to the Return to Activities protocol in light of the vaccines?

No, it is too early in the vaccine process to make a modification to the Return to Activities protocol. Special Olympics requires that all programs continue to follow the Return to Activities Protocols.

If I get vaccinated do I have to follow Return to Activities protocols (wearing a mask, filling out a waiver, social distancing, hand washing)?

Yes, Special Olympics requires all participants to follow Return to Activities protocols.

Can a coach, volunteer or head of delegation (HOD) refuse or deny an athlete, Unified partner or coach from participating if they do not have a vaccination?

No. At this time, Special Olympics does not require vaccination for participation.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?

All the COVID-19 vaccines have gone through the same safety tests as any other vaccines. Like all vaccines, COVID-19 vaccines have been tested for safety before being authorized for use.

How effective is the COVID-19 vaccine?

All the vaccines are effective at preventing severe disease and death from COVID-19.

How many COVID-19 vaccines are there?

According to the World Health Organization, as of 18 February 2021, there are at least seven different vaccines. As of this writing, there are currently several COVID-19 vaccines starting to be used in different parts of the world, including the Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, Oxford-AstraZeneca, Johnson and Johnson, Sinovac/CoronaVac, and Sputnik V vaccines. More than 200 additional vaccine candidates are in development, of which more than 60 are in clinical development.

What is the best COVID-19 vaccine for me to get?

Different types of COVID-19 vaccines are available. All types of the vaccines will help protect you. More vaccines may be developed. Most of these vaccines are given in two shots, one at a time and spaced apart. The first shot gets your body ready. The second shot is given at least three weeks later to make sure you have full protection. If you are told you need two shots, make sure that you get both of them.

How will I know if I can get the COVID-19 vaccine?

In Washington state, anyone over the age of 16 is eligible to receive the vaccine. You can also call your doctor to find out if you can get the COVID-19 vaccine. Don't forget to mention if you are in a high risk group! As more vaccine becomes available, more people will be able to get the vaccine.

Where can I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Call your local health authorities or your doctor to find out the best place for you to get the vaccine. The vaccine is being given at many types of places. These include community sites, doctor's offices, clinics, hospitals, and pharmacies. As more vaccines becomes available, more locations will be offering the vaccine. You can use the [Vaccine Locater](#) to find the closes location to you.

How can I safely get a COVID-19 vaccine during the COVID-19 pandemic?

When going to get the COVID-19 vaccine, [practice everyday preventive actions](#). Any vaccination location following your health authority's guidance should be a safe place for you to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

How does the COVID-19 vaccine work?

You will get the vaccine as an injection in your upper arm. It will only take a few minutes.

Depending on the type of vaccine you get, you will get either two doses, spread across multiple weeks, or you will get one shot, or dose.

The person who will give you the vaccine will be a nurse, doctor or someone who is trained.

How should I prepare for my COVID-19 vaccine appointment?

Make sure you bring any important paperwork with you. Some places will require you to show a form of identification, like a driver's license or an identification card with a photo. Do not forget to wear your mask when you go get your vaccine!

Will the shot hurt or make me sick?

The vaccine will not make you sick. You might feel a slight pinch. There may be side effects, but they should go away within a few days. Possible side effects include a sore arm, headache, fever, or body aches. This does not mean you have COVID-19. These side effects are signs that the vaccine is working. If they don't go away in a week, or you have more serious symptoms, call your doctor or healthcare professional.

Can children get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Not yet. Studies are now underway with COVID-19 vaccines that can be recommended for children younger than age 16.

Should I wear a face covering/mask when I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes! You should wear a face covering whenever you are out in public and/or if you show symptoms of COVID-19. Face coverings can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 to others.

Why is Special Olympics encouraging athletes to get vaccinated?

Special Olympics is advocating for people with intellectual disabilities to be further prioritized to receive the vaccination should they choose to as people with intellectual disabilities are two to four times more likely to die from COVID-19.

What is Special Olympics doing to promote that people with intellectual disabilities should have priority access to the COVID-19 vaccine right now?

We know from recent research and studies that people with ID are dying from COVID at much higher rates than people without ID. Special Olympics has created advocacy and education materials to help athletes understand information about the COVID-19 vaccines and practice prevention. All materials are based on guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization. These materials include template advocacy letters, literature reviews, printable posters, key messages, athlete videos sharing their personal experiences getting the COVID-19 vaccine as well as social media graphics to promote understanding of the COVID-19 vaccine and bring awareness to the latest data reporting that people with intellectual disabilities are dying at much higher rates than those without intellectual disabilities. All education materials can be found [here](#) and all advocacy materials can be found on the [Special Olympics Resources](#) page.



What You Need to Know About the COVID-19 Vaccine



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Vaccines (shots) are one of the tools we have to fight the COVID-19 pandemic

Special Olympics encourages everyone who has access to the COVID-19 vaccine, to get vaccinated. The vaccine will help protect you from getting COVID-19. Studies show that COVID-19 vaccines are very effective at keeping you from getting COVID-19. By getting vaccinated, you may also help protect people around you.



How the COVID-19 vaccine works

There are a few different COVID-19 vaccines available. Some vaccines take only one shot. Like the flu shot. Some have two shots. If you have a vaccine that has two shots, the shot will happen in two parts. The first shot gets your body ready. The second shot is given at least three weeks later to make sure you have full protection. If you are told you need two shots, make sure that you get both of them. All types of the vaccines will help protect you.



The COVID-19 vaccine is safe

All the COVID-19 vaccines that are being used have gone through the same safety tests as any other vaccines produced through the years.



It's very important for people with ID to get the COVID-19 vaccine

Globally, studies have shown that people with ID are 2-4x more likely to die from COVID-19 than the general population. In the United States, the most recent study shows that people with ID are almost 6x more likely to die from COVID-19.





Side Effects from the COVID-19 vaccine



Vaccines may cause side effects in some people. Like sore muscles, feeling tired, or a mild fever. These reactions mean the vaccine is working. It's teaching your body how to fight COVID-19 if you are exposed. Most people only have these side effects for a few days. If you have any of these side effects, it does not mean you have COVID-19.

When to get vaccinated

Get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you have access to the vaccine. Most of the world does not have access to the vaccine yet. But as more vaccines become available, it will be available to more people.



Where to get vaccinated

The vaccine is being given at many types of places. At doctor's offices, clinics, hospitals, and pharmacies. Call your local health authorities. Or call your doctor to find out the best place for you to get the vaccine. As more vaccine becomes available, more places will be offering the vaccine.



Continue protecting yourself from getting COVID-19

You still need to protect yourself if you have gotten the COVID-19 vaccine. Wear your mask. Wash your hands often. Practice social distancing. Right now, experts don't know how long the vaccine will protect you. It's a good idea to continue following the guidelines from your local health authorities. We know that not everyone has access to the vaccine right now. It's still important to protect yourself and others.

