



[Home](#) > [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) > [Multiple Sclerosis & Coronavirus](#) > [COVID-19 Vaccine Guidance for People Living with MS](#)

## COVID-19 Vaccine Guidance for People Living with MS



[In this article](#)

- › [Overall Society statement on vaccination](#)
- › [COVID-19 mRNA vaccine guidance for people living with MS](#)
- › [People with MS should be vaccinated against COVID-19](#)
- › [The COVID-19 vaccines are safe for people with MS](#)
- › [The vaccines are safe to use with MS medications](#)
- › [All of us have a personal responsibility to slow the spread of the pandemic and eliminate the virus as quickly as possible](#)
- › [Individuals consulted in the development of this guidance](#)
- › [Additional Resources](#)

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### 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. Please review the full guidance below to learn more about COVID-19 vaccines and multiple sclerosis.

### 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 administered to people with 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 mRNA vaccines authorized for use in the United States, Pfizer BioNTech and Moderna.

### People with MS should be vaccinated against COVID-19

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 be vaccinated against COVID-19 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 vaccinated as soon as it becomes available to you.

These COVID-19 vaccines require two doses. You need to get both doses for it to be most effective. 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.

## Take the First Step

Learn how states are prioritizing who will get the COVID-19 vaccine. The first step to getting your vaccination is finding out when you will be eligible to receive it in accordance with your state's guidelines.

## 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, Mavenclad, 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. Review our considerations of timing MS medications with these vaccines.

## 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](#).

## Individuals consulted in the development of this guidance

The National MS Society consulted the following individuals in the development of this guidance:

### MS neurologists and experts

- › Nancy Sicotte, MD, FAAN—Chair, National MS Society’s National Medical Advisory Committee, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, USA
- › Brenda Banwell, MD— Chair of MS International Federation International Medical and Scientific Advisory Board (IMSB) – University of Pennsylvania, USA
- › Amit Bar-Or, MD, FRCPC—President, International Society for Neuroimmunology - University of Pennsylvania, USA
- › Jorge Correale, MD-- Raul Carrea Institute for Neurological Research, FLENI, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- › Anne Cross, MD, FAAN—Washington University and Secretary of Board of Governors of the Consortium of MS Centers, USA
- › Jaime Imitola, MD, FAAN—University of Connecticut, UConn Health, USA
- › Dorlan Kimbrough, MD—Duke University, USA
- › Avindra Nath, MD—National Institutes of Health/National Institutes of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, USA
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**This guidance is endorsed by the Consortium of MS Centers, the [MS Coalition](#) and other organizations:**

- › [Accelerated Cure Project for Multiple Sclerosis](#)
- › [Americas Committee on Treatment and Research in Multiple Sclerosis](#)
- › [Can Do Multiple Sclerosis](#)
- › [Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers](#)
- › [International Organization of Multiple Sclerosis Nurses](#)
- › [International Society of Neuroimmunology](#)

- › [MS Views and News](#)
- › [Multiple Sclerosis Association of America](#)
- › [Multiple Sclerosis Foundation](#)
- › [Multiple Sclerosis International Federation](#)
- › [National Multiple Sclerosis Society](#)
- › [United Spinal Association](#)

## Additional Resources

### Ask an MS Expert videos:

- › [COVID-19 Vaccine and MS - January 15, 2021](#)
- › [Hábitos de Salud y Bienestar en EM / Actualización de la Vacuna contra el COVID-19 \(En español\) - 20 de enero de 2021](#)



## Suspected COVID-19 and MS

Keep up-to-date on topics such as: Effects of COVID-19 on those affected by MS, COVID-19 registries for those with MS, and COVID-19 and relapses.

[Learn More](#)



## MS Treatment Guidelines During Coronavirus

Expert advice about disease modifying therapies, tips on social distancing, relapses for those living with MS during the Coronavirus pandemic.

[Learn More](#)



## En Español

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En Español

Estamos observando de cerca la situación del coronavirus (COVID-19) y tomando decisiones sobre la mejor manera de actuar en esta situación sin precedente.

[Aprende Más](#)

Participants & Volunteers

The health and safety of people with multiple sclerosis and their families is our top priority as we move through the COVID-19 pandemic together. Contact [Fundraising Support](#) for event related questions or check your [event website](#).

Learn more about:

- › [Ask an MS Expert Webinars](#)
- › [Virtual Self-Help Groups](#)
- › [Programs & Events](#)

## The National MS Society is Here to Help

 Need More Information?

## We Are Here

Our MS Navigators help identify solutions and provide access to the resources you are looking for. Call 1-800-344-4867 or contact us online.

[Contact Us](#)

 ASK AN MS EXPERT

## Weekly Webinars

The Ask an MS Expert weekly webinar series is an opportunity to learn more about multiple sclerosis from top MS experts.

[Learn More](#)