



The COVID-19 Vaccine is Coming Soon. Should You Get It?

Information for Native American Youth and Families

We know that some of you may not trust the vaccine. That is understandable, especially given the history of the U.S. government causing medical harm to Native American people.

Here is some information straight from Native American elders and others in the community to help you make your own choice about whether to get the vaccine.

“I weighed out the pros and cons. The pros won over. I felt it was more important to do something to try and help protect myself, my family, those I work with, and my community than to pass up the opportunity to do something proactive.”

Derwin Decker, Modoc, Enrolled Klamath Tribes, OYA Native American Services Coordinator

Adapted from information from the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board:

Making the Vaccine

The two vaccines that are currently being used were made by companies called Moderna and Pfizer. Both companies did clinical trials before distributing the vaccine. A clinical trial is when a new treatment is tested by volunteers to determine if it is safe and effective.

Clinical trials have three main phases, where they give the vaccine to thousands of people to see if it's safe, and to see if it's good at keeping them from getting sick.

Between 30,000 and 60,000 people participated in the trials for the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. This included both healthy people and people at higher risk of contracting COVID-19. Both vaccines were about 95% effective for all races, genders, and ages!

It's much better to have the vaccine than to get sick with COVID-19 because the disease can have serious, life-threatening complications. There is no way to know how it will affect you.



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Were tribes consulted in the process?

Yes, very much. Tribes and the Indian Health Service (IHS) were part of the vaccine planning process. Senior members of the Indian Health Service assisted the federal government program that developed the vaccines.

Tribes were also invited to participate in the vaccine trials if they chose. The Navajo Nation, the Lummi and Nooksack Nations all participated in vaccine trials. This helps researchers understand which vaccines are most effective for tribal populations.

How do we know it is safe?

There were several things done during the trials to help make the COVID-19 vaccines safe. These included:

- Many thousands more people participated in the COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials than in a normal clinical trial for other vaccines.
- Washington, Oregon, Nevada, and California joined together to independently review the safety and effectiveness of the vaccines.
- People who participated in the clinical trials were monitored after they received the vaccines to see if they had any problems. There were no serious side effects for anyone.

Participation by indigenous and people of color along with the elderly and people with underlying conditions was prioritized in the trials because these people have been the hardest hit by COVID-19. One of the vaccine candidates reported that 37% of the participants in its trial are people of color.

What are the side effects?

It is possible you may have minor side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine. The most common side effects are tiredness, muscle aches, and headaches. Usually, these only last a few days. Some people have no side effects at all. More people report having side effects after their second dose of the vaccine, but they still go away within a few days.



“I thought long and hard about it, and I ultimately realized it was my responsibility to get the vaccine. I work in the facilities with youth and staff. In my household, I have small children up to the elderly. It’s my responsibility to protect myself and protect other people. I had to overcome any distrust I had and realize nobody was out to hurt me. I was never coerced or forced to do it. It was my personal choice.”

Leslie Riggs, member of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and OYA’s Tribal Liaison