

Monitoring for Post-Vaccine Anaphylaxis: Practical Tips for Providers

California COVID-19 Vaccination Program



Observation period following COVID-19 vaccination *

CDC **currently recommends** that persons without contraindications to vaccination who receive an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine be observed after vaccination for the following time periods:

30 minutes

- Persons with a history of an immediate allergic reaction of any severity to a vaccine or injectable therapy
- Persons with a history of anaphylaxis due to any cause (including anaphylaxis to oral medications, food, pet, insect, venom, environmental, latex, etc.)

15 minutes

- All other persons

* Note: Persons may be observed for longer, based on clinical concern. For example, if a person develops itching and swelling at the injection site during the post-vaccination observation period, this period may be extended to assess for development of any hypersensitivity signs or symptoms consistent with anaphylaxis.

Early recognition of anaphylaxis

Because anaphylaxis requires immediate treatment, diagnosis is primarily made based on **recognition of clinical signs and symptoms**, including:

- **Respiratory:** sensation of throat closing or tightness, stridor (high-pitched sound while breathing), hoarseness, respiratory distress (such as shortness of breath or wheezing), coughing, trouble swallowing/drooling, nasal congestion, rhinorrhea, sneezing
- **Gastrointestinal:** nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, or cramps
- **Cardiovascular:** dizziness; fainting; tachycardia (abnormally fast heart rate); hypotension (abnormally low blood pressure); pulse difficult to find or “weak”; cyanosis (bluish discoloration); pallor; flushing
- **Skin/mucosal:** generalized hives; widespread redness; itching; conjunctivitis; or swelling of eyes, lips, tongue, mouth, face, or extremities
- **Neurologic:** agitation; convulsions; acute change in mental status; sense of impending doom (a feeling that something bad is about to happen)
- **Other:** sudden increase in secretions (from eyes, nose, or mouth); urinary incontinence

Tips for monitoring for anaphylaxis at walk-in COVID-19 vaccine clinics

- Designate an area where vaccinees can be monitored in a socially distanced way following vaccination.
- Consideration can be given to designating separate areas for 15-minute and 30-minute observation periods
- Inform vaccinees of the need to stay after vaccination for monitoring.
- Provide vaccinees a sticky note/small piece of paper with the time that their observation period is over.
- Designate a trained observer to monitor vaccinees for signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis. The observer should have a checklist or other tool to track the 15- or 30-minute observation period for each vaccinee.
- Any vaccinee who is not feeling well or experiencing symptoms during the observation period should be evaluated by a qualified professional.

Tips for monitoring for anaphylaxis at drive-through COVID-19 vaccine clinics

- When publicizing a mass vaccination event, consider suggesting that vaccinees attend with another person.
- Designate a parking area where vaccinees can park their cars to be monitored following vaccination.
- Consideration can be given to designating separate areas for 15-minute and 30-minute observation periods.
- Inform vaccinees of the need to stay after vaccination for monitoring.
- Provide a sticky note to windshield with the time the person's observation period has ended.
- Designate a trained observer to monitor vaccinees in parked cars:
 - The observer should have a checklist or other tool to track the 15- or 30-minute observation period for each vaccinee.
 - The observer should walk in and out of lanes checking in on people.
- Any vaccinee who is not feeling well or experiencing symptoms during the observation period should be evaluated by a qualified professional.
- Advise vaccinees to honk their horn or flash their lights if they begin to feel symptoms that could be anaphylaxis.
- Advise vaccinees to keep their windows down and doors unlocked so they may be easily reached in case of anaphylaxis.

CDC Guidance

- [Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines Currently Authorized in the United States](#)
- [Interim Considerations: Preparing for the Potential Management of Anaphylaxis After COVID-19 Vaccination](#)