

Office of Health Equity

Veterans Health Administration

Department of Veterans Affairs



DIFFERENCES IN COVID-19 VACCINATION RATES IN WOMEN VETERANS

INFORMATION BRIEF

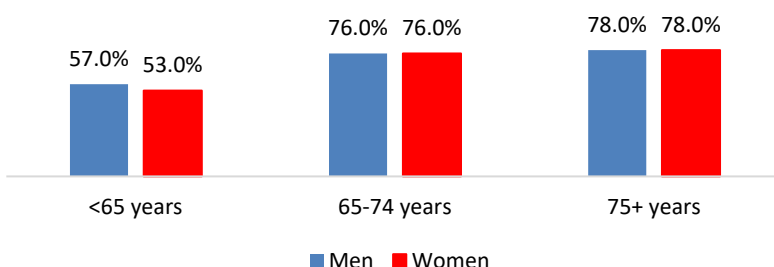
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INTRODUCTION

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) serves a Veteran population that is increasingly diverse. Equitable access to high-quality care for all Veterans is a major tenet of the VA healthcare mission. The Office of Health Equity (OHE) champions the elimination of health disparities and achieving health equity for all Veterans.

According to [VA's Office of Women's Health](#), by 2040, women will be 18% of the Veteran population. Women are also the fastest growing group of Veterans using VA services. The number of women Veterans using VHA services has tripled since 2001, growing from 159,810 to over 550,000 today. In fact, women make up 30% of all new VHA patients.

Rates of Veterans who have Received, or Reported Receiving, at Least One COVID-19 Vaccine by Sex and Age, June 2022



COVID-19 VACCINATION RATES AMONG WOMEN VETERANS

The rates of COVID-19 vaccination among women Veterans vary by age. Women Veterans who are 65 years old or older have the same rates of COVID-19 vaccination as male Veterans. However, women Veterans who are younger than 65 years old have slightly lower rates of COVID-19 vaccination than their male counterparts.

REASONS FOR VETERAN VACCINE HESITANCY

There are several reasons why Veterans might be hesitant to receive a COVID-19 vaccine:

- Being concerned about side effects
- Being concerned about the newness of the COVID-19 vaccine
- Preferring to use as few medicines as possible
- Preferring to gain natural immunity
- Having a lack of trust in the health care system
- Not believing in vaccines in general

Source: VA COVID vaccinations of & vaccination refusals by Veterans for each VISN and VAMC by race/ethnicity, rurality, and sex & stratified by age



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PREGNANCY RISKS FROM COVID-19 INFECTION

Pregnant people are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Severe illness may mean having to go to the hospital, needing a ventilator to breathe, or having an illness that results in death. People who are pregnant and develop COVID-19 also have an increased risk of preterm birth.

BENEFITS OF COVID-19 VACCINATION FOR WOMEN VETERANS

The [CDC and other experts](#) strongly recommend that people who are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding get a COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccines and boosters continue to protect against new forms of the coronavirus. However, there are some identified concerns that women may have about receiving a COVID-19 vaccine. They are:

Possible Reduced Fertility

There is currently no evidence that vaccine ingredients or antibodies made following COVID-19 vaccination would cause any problems with becoming pregnant now or in the future.

Menstrual Changes

People who menstruate may observe small, temporary changes in their periods after COVID-19 vaccination, including:

- Longer-lasting menstrual periods
- Shorter intervals between periods
- Heavier bleeding than usual

There is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines cause any long-lasting menstrual changes.

COVID-19 Vaccines Causing a COVID-19 Infection

COVID-19 vaccines do not cause COVID-19 infections, including in people who are pregnant or their babies. None of the COVID-19 vaccines contain live virus and therefore, they cannot make anyone sick with COVID-19.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WOMEN AND COVID-19 VACCINATION, VISIT:

- [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, COVID-19 Vaccines for Specific Groups of People page.](#)
- [The VA's COVID-19 Vaccination Information page.](#)
- [The American College of Obstetrician and Gynecologist's page on COVID-19.](#)



The services offered by Women Veterans Health Care can be found [here](#).

More information about the Office of Health Equity can be found [here](#).

References

Jasuja GK, Meterko M, Bradshaw LD, Carbonaro R, Clayman ML, LoBrutto L, Miano D, Maguire EM, Midboe AM, Asch SM, Gifford AL, McInnes DK, Elwy AR. Attitudes and Intentions of US Veterans Regarding COVID-19 Vaccination. JAMA Network Open. 2021 Nov 1;4(11):e2132548.