

Soldiers now have additional COVID-19 vaccine options

By Michael Reinsch, Army News Service 03 September 2022



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U.S. Army Spc. Eyza Carrasco, left, with 2nd Cavalry Regiment, administers a COVID-19 vaccination at the 7th Army Training Command's (7ATC) Rose Barracks, Vilseck, Germany, May 3, 2021. (U.S. Army photo by Markus Rauchenberger)

WASHINGTON — A new COVID-19 vaccine will be available to Soldiers as an alternative to the Pfizer BioNTech, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccines, the Army recently announced.

"With the availability of the NOVAVAX vaccine, we are pleased to have another tool to help combat the spread of COVID-19," said Lt. Gen. R. Scott Dingle, Army Surgeon General and commanding general of U.S. Army Medical Command.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued an emergency use authorization July 13, 2022 for the Novavax COVID-19 Vaccine, for the prevention of COVID-19 caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) in individuals 18 years of age and older.

"The Novavax vaccine is something called a 'recombinant protein vaccine.' These types of vaccines have been used since the 1980s. Other

recombinant protein vaccines include the vaccines for shingles, hepatitis B, and human papillomavirus,” Dingle said.

Novavax provides an option for Soldiers who are not fully vaccinated and uses a different technology from the mRNA and viral vector vaccine options. Dr. Steven Cersovsky, Deputy Director of the Army Public Health Center, said Novavax performs like a traditional vaccine.

“In a more ‘traditional’ vaccine, like Novavax, the injection gives your body a part of the virus: in this case, it’s giving you one protein, the spike protein,” Cersovsky said. “And it allows your body to generate an immune response to that protein.”

Novavax, a two-dose vaccine that does not have a recommended booster, has been widely used in Europe since early 2022 and has been shown to be as effective as other vaccines at preventing severe disease, hospitalization and deaths from the coronavirus infection, Cersovsky said.

Soldiers who voluntarily choose to get Novavax will be considered in compliance with the DOD COVID-19 vaccine mandate.

“This vaccine, as one component of all recommended vaccines, supports the Army’s goals of sustaining a proficient and ready medical force and healthy Soldiers for Life, Army civilians, and families,” Dingle said.

“Soldiers have the option and can consult [with] their healthcare providers on the medical aspects, and they have the option to consult [with] their chaplains on the religious aspect,” said Lt. Col. William Martin, chaplain and religious accommodations and moral ethics officer at the Army’s Office of the Chief of Chaplains. “This is a religious matter affecting a medical reality; it’s really a team advisement here in order to give that Soldier the best information so that, in accordance with their sincerely held religious beliefs, they can make the best decision.”

Commanders and medical professionals are being provided with information regarding Novavax; if Soldiers are interested in more information to see if Novavax is right for them, they can contact their commanders, chaplains or medical professionals.

“Our number-one priority is protecting the health and welfare of our greatest assets – our Soldiers, our family members and Army civilians,” Dingle said. “We will continue to ensure that our personnel have the most accurate information on protective measures they can take to reduce the spread of COVID-19.”

