COVID-19 Vaccine

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Updated 1/12/22

ABOUT THE VACCINE

How does the COVID-19 vaccine work?

Vaccines work with your body's natural defenses so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. This is also called immunity. COVID-19 vaccination works by teaching your immune system how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19, and this protects you from getting sick with the virus.

For more information on understanding how COVID-19 vaccines work, visit: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/how-they-work.html

Will the vaccine give me COVID-19?

No. There is no live virus in the vaccines, so they can't infect you.

How did they make the vaccine so quickly?

Many pharmaceutical companies invested significant resources into quickly developing a vaccine for COVID-19 because of the world-wide impact of the pandemic. Both Pfizer and Moderna used similar processes when developing their vaccine. Even though COVID-19 is new, these types of viruses (called coronaviruses) have been studied since the 1960s. This knowledge helped scientists understand the virus to make a vaccine.

How do I really know if COVID-19 vaccines are safe?

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) reviews all data before recommending any COVID-19 vaccine. More than 70,000 people of different ages, races, ethnicities, and medical conditions participated in clinical trials to make sure the vaccines meet safety standards and offer the protections we need.

For more information on ensuring the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S., visit: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety.html

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for children?

Yes, the vaccine has proven to be highly effective and safe in children both in clinical studies and real-world data. Currently, only Pfizer has been approved for children 5 and older. Moderna will likely be available soon as well but is currently authorized for ages 18 and up, as Johnson & Johnson.

I have allergies. Should I take the vaccine?

CDC recommends that people with a history of severe allergic reactions not related to vaccines or injectable medications—such as food, pet, venom, environmental, or latex allergies—get vaccinated. If you have concerns, consult your health care provider.

For information about COVID-19 vaccines for people with allergies, visit: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/specific-groups/allergies.html

If I have already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, you should be vaccinated regardless of whether you already had COVID-19. That's because experts do not yet know how long you are protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. Even if you have already recovered from COVID-19, it is possible—although rare—that you could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 again.
For more information about why getting vaccinated is a safer way to build protection than getting infected, visit:
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/vaccine-beneflts.html
If you were treated for COVID-19 with monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma, you should wait 90 days before getting a COVID-19 vaccine. Talk to your doctor if you are unsure what treatments you received or if you have more questions about getting a COVID-19 vaccine. Experts are still learning more about how long vaccines protect against COVID-19 in real-world conditions. CDC will keep the public informed as new evidence becomes available.

Is there any reason I shouldn't get the vaccine?

Because of age, health conditions, or other factors, some people should not get certain vaccines or should wait before getting them. To learn more about who should **NOT** get the vaccine, visit:
https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html

Do I still have to wear a mask after getting the vaccine?

Due to the increase of cases and the variants, the CDC updated their guidance for fully vaccinated people and now highly recommends the use of a mask indoors in areas of substantial or high transmission. At this moment, all of California qualifies as such. Additionally, counties such as LA and the Bay Area have issued indoor mask mandates regardless of vaccination status.
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html

VACCINE EFFECTIVENESS

Do the vaccines work differently or have different side effects for people of diverse ages, racial backgrounds, sexes, and other differences?

Trial results have shown that the vaccines are safe and work well for adults of all ages, races, genders, and ethnic backgrounds.

How long will the COVID-19 vaccine last?

Research has indicated that immunity may start to wane 5-6 months after the initial dose(s). Further research will tell us more about how long immunity after booster shots last and if people will need more shots in the future.

Does the vaccine sterilize women?

No. Stories and claims on social media and anti-vaccination websites saying that the vaccine interferes with the formation of the placenta are false. There is no evidence the vaccine would result in sterilization of women.

Does the vaccine protect me against variants?

While COVID vaccines are slightly less effective against the current variants, data shows that they still provide very strong protection against severe COVID-19, hospitalization, and death.

Additionally, as more people are vaccinated, the virus will be less likely to mutate. More vaccines = less variants.

GETTING VACCINATED

Who is paying for the COVID-19 vaccines?

The federal government is providing the vaccines free of charge to all people living in the United States. Vaccination providers can be reimbursed for vaccine administration fees by the patient's public or private insurance company or, for uninsured patients, by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund. No one can be denied a vaccine if they are unable to pay a vaccine administration fee.

What happens when I get the vaccine?

The Moderna and Pfizer vaccines currently available require two shots spaced 3–4 weeks apart. The first shot helps your body recognize the virus and helps prepare your immune system, and the second shot strengthens that immune response. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine requires only 1 shot to be effective.

What happens if I only get 1 shot?

For the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, you need both shots to be fully protected. We strongly recommend that you get both shots. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine requires only 1 shot to be effective.

Will I be able to choose which vaccine I get?

The vaccine you get will be based on what your provider has available. All COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States have been show to be effective at preventing COVID-19.

How long does protection from a COVID-19 vaccine last?

Research has indicated that immunity may start to wane 5-6 months after the initial dose(s). Further research will tell us more about how long immunity after booster shots last and if people will need more shots in the future.

What we do know is that COVID-19 has caused very serious illness and death for a lot of people. If you get COVID-19, you also risk giving it to loved ones who may get very sick. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is a safer choice. Experts are working to learn more about both natural immunity and vaccine-induced immunity. CDC will keep the public informed as new evidence becomes available.

Do I need to have a COVID-19 test before I get the vaccine?

No, you do not need a COVID-19 test before getting a vaccine.

Can I still get COVID-19 after I get the vaccine?

All COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States have been shown to be highly effective at preventing COVID-19. While it's possible you can still get COVID-19 and be sick even if you get the vaccination, most studies show that most people who get the vaccine, get less sick than those who do not get the vaccine.

To learn more about the different COVID-19 vaccines, please visit:
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines.html

Can I get vaccinated against COVID-19 while I am currently sick with COVID-19?

No. People with COVID-19 who have symptoms should wait to be vaccinated until they have recovered from their illness and have met the criteria for discontinuing isolation; those without symptoms should also wait until they meet the criteria before getting vaccinated. This guidance also applies to people who get COVID-19 before getting their second dose of vaccine.

Isolation & Quarantine Guidelines: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER VACCINATION

What are the side effects?

Most people will have no side effects, but the vaccine may cause side effects in some people. For most, side effects will last no longer than a day or two.

Possible side effects include:

- On the arm where you got the shot: Pain, redness, and swelling
- Throughout the **rest of** your body:
- Fever, chills, headache, tiredness, joint and body aches

To **reduce pain and discomfort** where you got the shot:

- Apply a clean, cool, wet washcloth over the area Use or exercise your arm

To reduce other symptoms, talk to your doctor about taking an over-the-counter medication such as Tylenol or Ibuprofen.

Side effects are a sign that the vaccine is working to help teach your body how to fight COVID-19 if you are exposed. They do NOT mean you have COVID-19. You can't get COVID-19 from the vaccine. If you have questions about your health after your shot, call your doctor, nurse, healthcare provider or clinic.

Are there long-term side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine?

Because all COVID-19 vaccines are new, it will take more time and more people getting vaccinated to learn about very rare or possible long-term side effects.

What if I am vaccinated but exposed again to someone with COVID-19?

If you have not yet received a booster but are eligible to, you will need to quarantine and get tested. If you receive a negative test result on or after Day 5 and you do not have any symptoms, you can exit quarantine after Day 5. In this case, please wear a mask, social distance, and monitor your symptoms through Day 10.

If you have received a booster or are not eligible for a booster, you do not need to quarantine. Please test on Day 5 after exposure and wear a mask around others for 10 days after exposure.
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html

Do I need a booster shot?

This is a widely discussed and evolving topic, so be sure to expect changing guidance.

On August 18th, 2021, the CDC referred to new evidence that shows reduced protection from infection over time, even though effectiveness against hospitalization and death remains high.

As of January 2022, all people in the U.S. age 12+ are eligible for a booster shot.

At this time, CDC is recommending a third shot for individuals who are immunocompromised, such as those with HIV.

- The CDC recommends that you continue to use your masks after vaccination in areas where there may be unvaccinated people or in indoor areas to ensure your protection.

VACCINE PLANNING

When can I get the COVID-19 vaccination?

Vaccines are now available for everyone over 5 years of age.

MONITORING THE SAFETY OF THE COVID-19 VACCINES

There are several safety monitoring systems set up in the U.S., including:

- Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS): www.vaers.hhs.gov
- Vaccine Safety Datalink (VSD): www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/ensuringsafety/monitoring/vsd/index.html
- Clinical Immunization Safety Assessment Project (CISA): www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/ensuringsafety/monitoring/cisa/index.html
- "V-Safe": www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety.html
- Vaccine Reporting Systems: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/reporting-systems.html
- COVID-19 Vaccine Safety Monitoring Systems for Pregnant People: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019- n cov/vaccines/safety/monitoring-pregnant-people.html

COVID-19 vaccines are **safe** and **effective**. Millions of people in the United States have received COVID-19 vaccines under the most intense safety monitoring in U.S. history. CDC recommends you get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you are eligible. If you have any questions or want more information , please visit any of the links below to submit your questions or report any adverse events (possible side effects or health problems) that occur after vaccination.

Monitoring the Safety of the COVID-19 Vaccines

CDC continues to monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines for any health problems that happen after vaccination.

Since April 2021, there have been increased reports to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) of cases of inflammation of the heart—called myocarditis and pericarditis—happening after mRNA COVID-19 vaccination (Pfizer and Moderna) in the United States. These reports are rare, given the number of vaccine doses administered. CDC is actively monitoring and investigating the reports to see whether there is any relationship to COVID-19 vaccination.

Most patients with myocarditis and pericarditis who received care responded well to medicine and rest and quickly felt better. The known and potential benefits of COVID-19 vaccination outweigh the known and potential risks, including the possible risk of myocarditis or pericarditis.

For more information on myocarditis and pericarditis following mRNA COVID-19 vaccination, visit: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/myocarditis.html

For additional information & questions about the COVID-19 vaccines, please visit:

Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccination: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html

CLINICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR VACCINATED PERSONS

Interim clinical considerations for use of MRNA COVID-19 Vaccines | CDC

For more information, visit:

- Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of COVID-19 Vaccines Currently Authorized in the United States: https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html
- CDC Guidance for Vaccinated Persons: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html
- CDC Travel Guidance: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html
- Quarantine Guidance: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html

OTHER RESOURCES

Vaccination Campaign (NRC-RIM)

The National Resource Center for Refugees, Immigrants and Migrants (NRC-RIM) in partnership with IDEO.org created vaccination campaigns to increase awareness of and confidence in COVID-19 vaccination for refugee, immigrant, and migrant communities and their families. Materials are available in several languages. See more here: https://nrcrim.org/vaccines/campaigns/vaccination-campaign

Adapted from the Vaccine FAQs developed by the City & County of San Francisco and the National Network of Disease Intervention Training Centers