



COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions Updated:

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COVID-19 vaccines are an important step in slowing the spread of the disease. You are encouraged to stay informed on COVID-19 vaccines and to discuss vaccination with your health care provider.

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GENERAL VACCINE INFORMATION

Which COVID-19 vaccines are available?

The [U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#) has authorized two COVID-19 vaccines for emergency use. These vaccines, manufactured by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, were developed to protect you from COVID-19 and require two doses. Several trials from multiple companies are continuing with promising results.

Initially, there will be a limited supply of the FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines with specific groups of people having access. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) (a committee within the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)) provides prioritization recommendations on which groups of people should get the vaccine first. State [health departments](#) may refine the guidance based on the amount of vaccine they are allocated and individual state needs or priorities. Review your [state health department's](#) information for local availability.

What is an Emergency Use Authorization or EUA?

The FDA has a [review process for safety and effectiveness](#) that it completes before it will authorize vaccines and other key preventive and treatment measures for use during public health emergencies. In December 2020, the FDA issued Emergency Use Authorizations (EUAs) to expedite the availability of the first two COVID-19 vaccines.

How do I know the vaccine is safe?

The U.S. vaccine safety system ensures that all vaccines, including the recently FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines, are as safe as possible. Even after EUA, the FDA continues to review clinical data about the vaccines.

Can I get the virus from the vaccine?

According to the CDC, COVID-19 vaccines will not give you COVID-19. The messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines that are currently authorized by the FDA do not contain the COVID-19 virus and are not capable of causing COVID-19 infection. Also, none of the other COVID-19 vaccines being developed in the United States use the live virus that causes COVID-19. The goal for each of the vaccines is to teach the body to find and fight the COVID-19 virus. Read more about these [facts](#) and others on the CDC website.

What is an mRNA vaccine?

COVID-19 messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines allow cells to make a spike protein that looks the same as a protein found on the surface of the virus. Our bodies recognize that the spike protein is foreign, so they create antibodies to fight the virus if it is encountered in the future.

How did the vaccine get developed so quickly?

The effort to develop a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine was a global effort fueled by a private-public partnership. Many pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies received government funding to prioritize vaccine research and innovative approaches to vaccine development. In addition, both EUA-approved vaccines adapted messenger RNA (mRNA) technology developed years ago for other medical research, dramatically reducing the timeline for the development of the actual vaccines. The vaccine testing was made possible with a large, diverse pool of adult volunteers.

What protection do the FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines provide?

FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines will help protect you from getting COVID-19. In fact, each vaccine reported strong protection from the disease:

- [Pfizer-BioNTech](#): According to the FDA, the two-dose COVID-19 vaccine was [~95% effective](#) at preventing COVID-19 in people age 16 and older, based on the Pfizer-BioNTech Phase 3 trial.
- [Moderna](#): According to the FDA, the two-dose COVID-19 vaccine was [~94% effective](#) at preventing COVID-19 in people age 18 and older, based on the Moderna Phase 3 trial.

Important reminders on the protection COVID-19 vaccines provide:

- Vaccines can take several weeks after the second dose to provide protection
- COVID-19 vaccines will help protect you from getting COVID-19, but you should follow CDC and state health guidelines to stop the spread of the disease
- The duration of protection against COVID-19 is currently unknown

Continue to follow public health safety guidelines to help protect yourself and others. Wear a face mask, practice physical distancing and wash hands regularly.

What populations were represented in the vaccine trials?

The first group studied included non-pregnant adults ages 18 years and older from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds. The Pfizer vaccine trial included teens and was just cleared for use on adolescents 16 years and older. Vaccines have not yet been tested on pregnant women or younger children.

What is herd immunity?

Herd immunity occurs when a large portion of a community (the herd) becomes immune to a disease, making the spread of disease from person to person unlikely. As a result, the whole community becomes protected – not just those who are immune –because the virus has fewer places to spread and survive. Achieving herd immunity through vaccination is both more effective and less devastating than by allowing the disease to spread. It risks far fewer lives and protects the ability of our health care system to provide a range of services, not just acute care for COVID-19 illness.

GETTING THE VACCINE

Why should I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

- **Lower your chances of getting COVID-19 or experiencing severe disease.** The vaccine helps to protect you by creating an antibody response without risking severe illness or spreading the disease to others.
- **Protect yourself, your family and your community.** You can spread COVID-19 without feeling sick.
- **Help stop the pandemic.** The more people who get vaccinated, the less opportunity COVID-19 has to spread and cause severe illness. We need to use all the tools we have to stop the pandemic. Even after getting the COVID-19 vaccine, wearing a mask, physical distancing and handwashing will still be important.

Where can I get vaccinated?

Due to limited supply, COVID-19 vaccination is occurring in phases. People at highest risk are getting vaccines first. Vaccine availability and eligibility may vary locally.

[Find vaccine resources near you](#)

How much will it cost me to get vaccinated?

You will have \$0 cost-share on FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines, including when two doses are required, with both in- and out-of-network providers through the national public health emergency period.

When will I get access to COVID-19 vaccines?

Vaccine distribution is being coordinated by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and [state health departments](#). Since supplies are limited at this time, health care workers and residents of long-term care facilities will be the first to be vaccinated.

As more supply becomes available, the CDC [recommends](#) the next groups to get the vaccine will be people age 75 and older as well as non-health care essential workers (emergency workers, utility workers, teachers, etc.), followed by the third group: people ages 65-74, people ages 16-64 with high-risk medical conditions, and other essential workers not included in previous phases. From there, COVID-19 vaccines will become more available to broader groups.

COVID-19 vaccines may be more available in the spring to mid-year time frame as additional vaccines are FDA-authorized, produced and distributed. The goal will be for you to have the information you need about vaccines and to get the COVID-19 vaccine easily and conveniently.

NOTE: The [CDC](#) outlines the recommended vaccine distribution plan for the greatest impact on public health, but the ultimate distribution strategy is determined by each state.

Information is changing quickly. For more information, look to the [CDC](#) or your [state health department](#) for information on COVID-19 vaccine availability in your area.

I have already had COVID-19, doesn't that mean that I am immune to it?

Experts do not know how long immunity lasts after infection, but there is evidence to support that people are protected from reinfection for at least 90 days after diagnosis with COVID-19. There is not enough evidence to understand whether people could still spread the virus if they are re-infected, so it's important to continue to practice the standard safety protocols of masking, physical distancing, frequent hand washing and sanitization.

What are the potential side effects of the vaccine?

Similar to other vaccines, recipients of the COVID-19 vaccine can expect to have injection site discomfort, fatigue, headache, muscle pain, chills, and fever in the 24-48 hours after receiving the vaccine, with stronger reactions expected after the second dose. Side effects mean that your body is making antibodies to protect you from future infection. Side effects do not mean you have a COVID-19 infection.

If you have side effects that bother you or do not go away, you should report them to your vaccination provider or primary care provider.

In the event of an emergency, you should call 911 or go to the nearest hospital.

Can I get vaccinated if I'm pregnant?

Talk to your provider about your options. The vaccine has not yet been tested on pregnant women, so the decision should be one you make in consultation with your provider. If you and your provider decide that getting vaccinated during pregnancy is the right choice for you, you will be able to receive the vaccination if you meet the prioritization criteria.

Are there people who should not get COVID-19 vaccines?

People with certain conditions or of different ages are not yet recommended to get FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines. If you have questions about getting FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines, talk to your health care provider.

According to the [CDC](#), if you have ever had a severe allergic reaction to a vaccine or an injected medicine, you should ask your doctor if you should get the COVID-19 vaccine. A severe reaction is one that requires treatment at a hospital or with medications like an EpiPen (epinephrine).

The CDC recommends the people who have seasonal allergies or allergies to food, pets or oral medications, can still be vaccinated. If you have any questions, you should check with your health care provider.

For more information, read the FDA's [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine Fact Sheet](#) and [Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine Fact Sheet](#).

How many doses of the vaccine will be needed?

Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require two doses that are given between three and four weeks apart. Protection against COVID-19 develops one to two weeks after receiving the second dose.

If I get a vaccine from either Pfizer or Moderna, do the two shots need to be from the same manufacturer?

Yes. It is critical that both the first and second dose of the COVID-19 vaccines are the same product.

If the first dose makes me feel sick, do I really have to get the second dose?

Yes, one dose of the vaccine will not protect you. The vaccine is not effective unless you receive both doses. Not completing the series wastes the limited vaccine and means that someone else won't have the opportunity to get vaccinated. Those with severe reactions to the first dose may be advised by their health care provider to not receive the second dose. This decision should be made in consultation with your health care or vaccine provider.

Will I have a choice in which COVID-19 vaccine I receive?

Like the flu vaccine, vaccination providers will administer the COVID-19 vaccine based on availability. Vaccination providers may not have all FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines at their location. If you have questions, we encourage you to talk to your health care provider.

When should I plan on getting the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine?

You will need to get both doses in the required time frame to have protection from COVID-19. We encourage you to schedule appointments for both doses at the same time. Your vaccination provider should help you know when to get the second dose. The CDC is also offering the [v-safe](#) mobile app to help with second dose reminders.

Follow the vaccination instructions from the manufacturer, which includes making sure both doses are from the same manufacturer. The [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#) will require two doses, given three weeks apart. The [Moderna COVID-19 vaccine](#) will require two doses, given one month apart.

You are strongly encouraged to schedule both doses at the same time to meet these time frames and get protection from COVID-19. The vaccination provider should assist you with scheduling the second dose when you receive your first dose.

Can I receive the COVID-19(BioNTech and Moderna) vaccine at the same time I receive the flu or other vaccines?

The COVID-19 vaccine should be administered alone, with a minimum interval of 14 days before or after administration with any other vaccines. People receiving the COVID-19 vaccine may experience mild to moderate temporary symptoms such as fatigue, muscle aches, and a fever, it is recommended that you do not receive the COVID-19 vaccine simultaneously with another vaccine except under unusual circumstances.

Will I need to be vaccinated every year?

The duration of protection against COVID-19 is currently unknown.

Will I still need to wear a mask and continue physical distancing if I get vaccinated?

Yes. We know that a vaccine will protect you from getting sick with the virus, but you may still have the ability to spread the disease to others. Until a significant percentage of the population is vaccinated, everyone will need to continue masking, physical distancing, frequent hand washing and sanitizing.