



COVID-19 Vaccination FAQ*

1. What COVID-19 vaccines are currently available in the United States?

There are currently two vaccines that are authorized for emergency use by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and recommended to prevent COVID-19. The first is produced by Pfizer and requires two shots, 21 days apart. The second is produced by Moderna and requires two shots, 28 days apart.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines.html>

2. What does “Emergency Use Authorization” mean?

Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) is granted by the FDA during public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. It allows the FDA to use unapproved medical products to treat or prevent life-threatening diseases when certain criteria have been met. For an EUA to be issued, clinical trials and testing have proven quality and consistency of the vaccine. The FDA has determined that the known and potential benefits outweigh the known and potential risks of the vaccine. Clinical trials of the COVID-19 vaccine continue after the EUA is granted. <https://www.fda.gov/vaccines-blood-biologics/vaccines/emergency-use-authorization-vaccines-explained>

3. What is an mRNA vaccine and how does it work?

mRNA stands for “messenger RNA”. These vaccines differ from traditional vaccines in that they do not put an inactivated or weakened virus in the body. Instead, the mRNA enters cells and teaches those cells how to make a protein, or piece of protein, that triggers an immune response. In the case of the COVID-19 mRNA vaccines, the body’s cells will produce a spike protein similar to the spike protein found on the surface of the coronavirus. When that spike protein is displayed on the cell, the body produces antibodies to fight against it. Those antibodies stay in the body, leading to immunity against COVID-19. After the spike protein is made, the mRNA in the cell is broken down and discarded. The mRNA never enters the cell’s nucleus (where our DNA is kept), therefore it does not interfere with our body’s DNA. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/mrna.html>

https://www.aafp.org/dam/AAFP/documents/patient_care/public_health/COVID19-Vaccine-FAQs.pdf

4. Are the vaccines effective in preventing infection with the coronavirus?

The two vaccines currently available in the US for coronavirus have shown good efficacy at preventing infection. The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine was 95% effective

at preventing laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 illness in people without evidence of prior infection. The Moderna vaccine was 94.1% effective at preventing laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 illness after 2 doses in people without evidence of prior infection.

https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6950e2.htm?s_cid=mm6950e2_w
https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm695152e1.htm?s_cid=mm695152e1_w

5. Are the vaccines safe for me?

Clinical trials of all vaccines must first show they are safe and effective before any vaccine can be authorized or approved for use, including COVID-19 vaccines. The known and potential benefits of a COVID-19 vaccine must outweigh the known and potential risks of the vaccine for use under what is known as an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA).

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/vaccine-benefits.html>

Clinical trials of the vaccine are conducted on tens of thousands of participants according to FDA standards. In phase one, the vaccine is given to a small number of generally healthy people. If it's deemed safe, phase two begins. Phase two involves varying doses of the vaccine on hundreds of people with varying health statuses and demographics. Phase 3 involves thousands of people in broad demographic groups. This phase provides extensive information on the effectiveness and safety of the vaccine. The FDA is constantly monitoring the quality, safety and efficacy of the vaccine. <https://www.fda.gov/vaccines-blood-biologics/vaccines/emergency-use-authorization-vaccines-explained>

6. How many doses are required? What if I only get one dose?

Two doses are required for both the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines. For the Pfizer vaccine, there are 21 days between the first and second dose and for the Moderna vaccine, there are 28 days between the first and second dose.

FDA-authorized intervals for the two separate doses are based on evidence gathered in clinical trials. There is no current evidence that suggests if you only receive one dose of the vaccine, it will provide similar effectiveness as if you were to receive the recommended two doses. Therefore, the FDA recommends following the proper COVID-19 dosing schedule for the appropriate vaccines. [FDA Statement on Following the Authorized Dosing Schedules for COVID-19 Vaccines](#)

7. What are the side effects of the vaccines?

Some side effects are normal as the body builds protection against the virus. Common side effects in the arm at the injection site include pain or swelling. Throughout the rest of the body, side effects include fever, chills, tiredness or headache. If you experience pain or discomfort, or if side effects are concerning or don't seem to go away, contact your healthcare provider. If you get a COVID-19 vaccine and you think you might be having a severe allergic reaction after leaving the vaccination site, seek immediate medical care by calling 911.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/expect/after.html>

8. Is it more likely to have side effects with the second dose of vaccine?

Some side effects are normal and may occur after both the first and second dose of the vaccine, but are more likely to occur after the second dose. Side effects may feel like flu and could even affect your ability to do daily activities, but they should go away in a few days. If you have any concerns, you should reach out to your healthcare provider.

[Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

[Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

9. Can I be infected with COVID-19 as a result of receiving the COVID-19 vaccine?

No. None of the authorized COVID-19 vaccines currently being used in the US contain the live virus that causes COVID-19. This means that a COVID-19 vaccine cannot make you sick with COVID-19.

The vaccines being utilized teach a person's immune system how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19. Sometimes this process can cause symptoms, such as fever. These symptoms are normal and are a sign that the body is building protection against the virus that causes COVID-19.

It typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity (protection against the virus that causes COVID-19) after vaccination. That means it's possible a person could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and still get sick. This is because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection.

It is important to get BOTH doses. The first dose helps the immune system create a response against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The second dose further boosts the immune response to ensure long-term protection.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/facts.html>

10. After getting a COVID-19 vaccine, will I test positive for COVID-19 on a viral test?

No. Neither the recently authorized and recommended vaccines nor the other COVID-19 vaccines currently in clinical trials in the United States can cause you to test positive on viral tests, which are used to see if you have a current infection.

If your body develops an immune response—the goal of vaccination—there is a possibility you may test positive on some antibody tests. Antibody tests indicate you had a previous infection and that you may have some level of protection against the virus. Experts are currently looking at how COVID-19 vaccination may affect antibody testing results. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/facts.html>

11. Why should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

One important reason is that getting a COVID-19 vaccination will help to prevent you from getting COVID-19. COVID-19 can have serious, life-threatening complications, and there is no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you. In addition, if you get sick, you could spread the disease to friends, family, and others around you. Some facts about the COVID-19 vaccines:

- The COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States have been shown to be highly effective at preventing COVID-19.
- All COVID-19 vaccines that are in development are being carefully evaluated in clinical trials and will be authorized or approved only if they make it substantially less likely you'll get COVID-19.
- Based on what is known about vaccines for other diseases and early data from clinical trials, experts believe that getting a COVID-19 vaccine may also help keep you from getting seriously ill even if you do get COVID-19.
- Getting vaccinated yourself may also protect people around you, particularly people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/vaccine-benefits.html>

12. Will the Covid vaccines prevent you from spreading the virus?

Receiving the COVID-19 vaccine is important to help prepare your immune system to fight the virus in the event that you are exposed and is a crucial tool to help stop this pandemic. Continuing to wear masks and social distance on top of receiving the COVID-19 vaccine is the best combination to protect yourself and prevent the spread of the virus.

[Benefits of Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

13. I currently have COVID-19 and/or tested positive recently: should I get the vaccine?

If you currently have COVID-19 or have tested positive recently, the CDC recommends you should not receive the vaccine until you have fully recovered and certain criteria have been met that you no longer need to be isolated. This recommendation applies to those individuals who developed COVID-19 before receiving the vaccine and to those individuals who develop COVID-19 after receiving the first dose of the vaccine but before receiving the second dose of the vaccine.

[Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

In addition, current evidence suggests that reinfection with the virus that causes COVID-19 is uncommon in the 90 days after initial infection. Therefore, people with a recent infection should speak with their health care provider about delaying vaccination until the end of that 90-day period.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>

14. If I had COVID-19 and/or have/had antibodies, do I need to get a vaccine?

Yes. At the present time, scientists do not know how long someone is protected from getting sick again after they have had COVID-19. The immunity someone gains from having an infection, called natural immunity, varies from person to person. Some early evidence suggests natural immunity after having COVID-19 may not last very long.

Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that reinfection with COVID-19 is possible, you should plan to receive the vaccine regardless of whether you already had COVID-19 infection.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/facts.html>

However, anyone currently infected with COVID-19 should wait to get vaccinated until after their illness has resolved and after they have met the criteria to discontinue isolation.

Additionally, current evidence suggests that reinfection with the virus that causes COVID-19 is uncommon in the 90 days after initial infection. Therefore, people with a recent infection should speak with their health care provider about delaying vaccination until the end of that 90-day period.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>

15. If I had a flu shot do I still need to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. A flu vaccine will not protect you from getting COVID-19, but it can prevent you from getting influenza (flu) at the same time as COVID-19. This can keep you from having a more severe illness.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>

16. Can I get a COVID-19 vaccination at the same time as another vaccination?

The CDC recommends that you wait at least 14 days before getting any other vaccine, including a flu or shingles vaccine, if you get your COVID-19 vaccine first. And if you get another vaccine first, wait at least 14 days before getting your COVID-19 vaccine.

If a COVID-19 vaccine is inadvertently given within 14 days of another vaccine, you do not need to restart the COVID-19 vaccine series; you should still complete the series on schedule. When more data are available on the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines administered simultaneously with other vaccines, CDC may update this recommendation.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>

17. Should children get the COVID-19 vaccine? Currently, the Pfizer vaccine is approved for individuals age 16 and up, while the Moderna vaccine is approved for individuals age 18 and up. According to the CDC, children and adolescents outside of these authorized age groups should not receive COVID-19 vaccination at this time. Any decisions about vaccination of children should be discussed with a healthcare provider.

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html>

18. Should pregnant women get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Limited data is available to determine the safety of administering COVID-19 vaccines during pregnancy or for those breastfeeding although safety monitoring systems are in place to help gather more information about those who are receiving the vaccine while pregnant. Observational data does show that pregnant individuals who contract COVID-19 are at an increased risk for developing more serious health complications as well as adverse pregnancy outcomes. The CDC recommends pregnant individuals discuss the decision to receive the vaccine with their healthcare provider. Should a pregnant individual choose to be vaccinated, it is recommended that they continue to follow current COVID-19 guidelines to further prevent the spread.

[Vaccination Considerations for People who are Pregnant or Breastfeeding](#)

19. Who will receive the vaccine first?

Healthcare personnel and residents of long-term care (LTC) facilities will receive the COVID-19 vaccines first. A list of what qualifies as healthcare personnel can be found [here](#). LTC facility residents are a group at the highest risk of death from coronavirus, and thus are a priority. The next groups to be vaccinated are frontline essential workers (e.g. firefighters, police officers, manufacturing workers, grocery store workers, etc.) and people over the age of 75. These guidelines are changing frequently and may vary by state. Please check with your local/state health department for specific guidelines for you.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations.html>

20. Will I have to pay for the vaccine?

Vaccine doses purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars will be given to the American people at no cost. However, vaccination providers can charge an administration fee for giving someone the shot. Vaccination providers can be reimbursed for this 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 the vaccine administration fee.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>

***This document is a compilation of frequently asked questions with answers from a variety of reputable sources. It is not meant to replace discussion with a healthcare provider and should only be used for informational purposes. The information is up to date as of January 19, 2021.**

FAQ created by

