



COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ

Updated Jan. 15, 2021

1. How do vaccines work?

A vaccine sends a message to your immune system to tell it to produce antibodies, exactly like it would if you were exposed to the disease. That way if you are exposed to the disease your body already has the antibodies to fight it.

2. Will taking this vaccine make me sick?

COVID-19 vaccination will help protect you from getting COVID-19. You may have some side effects, which are normal signs that your body is building protection. Check with your doctor or a healthcare professional if you have concerns.

3. What are the side effects?

There may be some pain and swelling in the arm where you received the shot. You may also have: fever, chills, tiredness, or headache.

4. How will this vaccine help me?

COVID-19 vaccination will help protect you by creating an antibody (immune system) response without having to experience the sickness.

5. How will this vaccine help the people I love?

As more people are vaccinated there will be less people with COVID-19 in the community and the people we love will be less likely to get COVID-19.

6. Should I take this vaccine if the long-term effects are unknown?

The FDA and CDC are still learning about the long-term effects. However, the FDA felt comfortable enough with the initial research on long term effects that they approved the vaccines that are on the market.

7. I think I want to wait and see what the effects of this vaccine are before I take one. Why should I take it now?

The CDC recommends that everyone who can be vaccinated is vaccinated. It protects you and protects the people around you. The more people that are vaccinated the less chance you will get COVID-19.

8. This vaccine was developed in less than a year. How do I know it's safe?

Pharmaceutical companies work on a number of projects at a time working to end and treat many different diseases. When the pharmaceutical companies starting working on the COVID-19 vaccines they put as many scientists on the project as possible and they had a large investment from the federal government to fund the vaccine development. When we made manpower and funding easily accessible the vaccine could be developed much more quickly. The safety steps (clinical trials) were still conducted and there were no major long-term effects in the trial groups.

9. Will the vaccine have an effect on other medications, like birth control, diabetes or high blood pressure medications?

Vaccines do not usually have negative reactions with other medications, like birth control, diabetes, or high blood pressure medication. If you have a concern about a specific medication talk to your doctor.

10. How long does it take for the vaccine to work?

The COVID-19 vaccines available in the US right now are two dose vaccines. You receive your second dose four weeks after your first. One to two weeks after receiving your second dose, you should be protected. So in other words, about six weeks after you receive your first dose you will be protected.

11. Will I have to get the vaccine every year?

Scientists are still learning about how long the protection lasts.

12. Does the vaccine contain Mercury?

No, the COVID vaccines do not contain Mercury.

13. When will the pandemic end if we all get the vaccine?

Wearing masks, social distancing, and getting vaccinated is the best combination to work towards ending the pandemic.

14. How much will the vaccine cost?

The vaccine itself is free. You may be charged an administration fee that your insurance will cover. If you don't have insurance, there is a fund from the federal government that will cover the fee.

15. Can the vaccine cause long-hauler syndrome?

No. Long-hauler syndrome is caused by COVID-19. The vaccine doesn't contain any live virus so your body will not have the same reaction as it would have if you had COVID-19.

16. Can the vaccine be taken at the same time as other vaccines (flu, pneumovax, etc.)?

The current recommendation is to not take these vaccines within 4 weeks of receiving other vaccines. This is to minimize side effects and if you do experience side effects you will know what caused them.

17. Some people who have had COVID-19, particularly longer term cases, are being cautioned about taking the vaccine. They are worried their body will have the same immune response Is there any truth to this?

The vaccine will not cause the same immune response it contains no virus.

18. Will Medicare/Medicaid cover the cost?

Yes, if you have Medicare/Medicaid, the cost of the COVID-19 vaccine will be covered.

19. If more than one vaccine is approved, does it make sense to receive more than one? If so, which ones?

There are currently five vaccines in the U.S., but the CDC does not recommend receiving more than one type of COVID-19 vaccine. For the vaccines that require two doses, you must receive two doses of the same brand of vaccine. Just like the flu vaccines, there are vaccines from many different manufacturers, but you only receive one each flu season.

20. What resources are available for those who have adverse consequences?

You may have some side effects, which are normal signs that your body is building protection and should go away in a few days. In most cases, discomfort from fever or pain is normal. Contact your doctor or healthcare provider if the redness or tenderness where you got the shot increases after 24 hours, and/or the side effects are worrying you or do not seem to be going away after a few days. If you get a COVID-19 vaccine and you think you might be having a severe allergic reaction, seek immediate medical care by calling 911.

CDC and FDA encourage the public to report possible side effects (called adverse events) to the [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System \(VAERS\)](#).

CDC is also implementing a new smartphone-based tool called “v-safe” to check-in on people’s health after they receive a COVID-19 vaccine. When you receive your vaccine, you should also receive a “v-safe” information sheet telling you how to enroll in “v-safe.” If you enroll, you will receive regular text messages directing you to surveys where you can report any problems or adverse reactions you have after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine.

21. What if a person is infected at the time of administration?

If someone gets COVID in between doses of vaccine, or right before it was their turn to get vaccinated, they should wait until their illness is over, and they have completed their isolation period. It is OK if the second dose of vaccine needs to be delayed past the usual time.

22. If I have the antibodies, do I need to get the vaccine?

Yes. Everyone’s immune system responds differently to the virus. The CDC is still researching how long COVID-19 antibodies are able to protect you from COVID-19.

23. Will the vaccine cause infertility?

No. There is no evidence that it causes future infertility.

24. Is the vaccine harmful for people with cancer, kidney failure or liver damage?

There is no information about the safety of the vaccine specific to people with chronic kidney disease. The COVID-19 vaccine was tested on people who have diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, liver disease, lung disease, asthma, and HIV. The results of the clinical trials showed that the vaccine can be safely given to people who have these health conditions. Check with your doctor or healthcare professional to know if the COVID-19 vaccine is safe for you.

25. Will I still have to wear a mask after getting the vaccine?

Yes. It is important for everyone to continue using **all the tools** available to us to help stop this pandemic, like covering your mouth and nose with a mask, washing hands often, and staying at least 6 feet away from others. Experts need to understand more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide before changing recommendations. Other factors, like how many people get vaccinated and how much spread there is in a community will have an impact on if recommendations change.

26. I have an autoimmune disease. Can I get the vaccine?

People with autoimmune conditions were included in the Phase 3 studies for Pfizer and Moderna vaccines and no flares of disease were seen. However, this represents only a small number of people. If you have an autoimmune disease, ask your doctor or healthcare professional if the COVID-19 vaccine is safe for you.

27. Is the vaccine safe for organ transplant recipients who take immune-suppressants?

We are still learning about the safety of the vaccines specifically for people who take immunosuppressive drugs, such as kidney transplant recipients. If you have a transplant, ask your doctor or healthcare professional if the COVID-19 vaccine is safe for you.

28. Is there a test you can take to confirm that the vaccine is working – like a titer or antibody test?

No, there is no test you can take to confirm that the vaccine is working. If your body develops an immune response — the goal of vaccination — there is a possibility you may test positive on some antibody tests.

29. Does the vaccine stop people from getting infected, or only stop them from getting sick if infected?

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 COVID-19. However, it is not known whether the vaccine stops infection and transmission of the virus.

30. If the vaccine does not stop actual infection, can a person still spread it to others even though the vaccine has prevented them from sickness?

Yes. The virus enters in through the upper respiratory tracts, either through the nose or throat, and can still be coughed back out of the nose and mouth into the community and spread to others.

31. Will those people who have received the vaccine test positive?

The vaccine will NOT cause a person to test positive.

32. If you've received the vaccines do you still have to quarantine if you are a close contact of a positive case?

Yes

Sources:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Vaccines and preventable diseases
2. PA Department of Health
3. COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Plan