



COVID-19 Vaccine Safety FAQ

Updated June 4, 2021

General Vaccine Safety

- 1. Can getting the COVID-19 vaccine give me COVID-19?** No, you cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine.
- 2. How will I feel after getting the vaccine?** You may feel sick for a short amount of time after getting the vaccine. This is a normal reaction and means your body is building up strength to fight the COVID-19 virus. Side-effects are normal and should go away in a few days. You may have some short-term pain, redness, and swelling in your arm where you got the shot. You may also have fever, chills, tiredness, muscle pain, an upset stomach, and headache. If you got a 2-dose vaccine like Moderna or Pfizer, you may feel worse after your second shot. It is also normal if you do not feel sick after getting the COVID-19 vaccine.
- 3. This vaccine was made in less than a year. How do I know it's safe?** COVID-19 is one of many coronaviruses. Even though COVID-19 is a new kind of coronavirus, other coronaviruses have made people sick before (SARS in 2003 and MERS in 2012). The COVID-19 vaccine was made using years of research on other coronaviruses. Also, medical staff from all over the world came together to work on the COVID-19 vaccine. Because so many people were working on the COVID-19 vaccine at the same time, it was able to be made more quickly than usual. Lastly, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will only allow a vaccine for Emergency Use if it is safe and effective.
- 4. Did the COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials include people from different races and backgrounds?** Yes, but people of color were underrepresented in the COVID-19 clinical trials. However, the vaccine was equally safe and effective for people of color.
- 5. The vaccines have "EMERGENCY USE AUTHORIZATION (EUA)" instead of "APPROVAL" by the FDA. What does this mean?**
 - Emergency Use Authorization: the vaccine is tested and made at the same time, and then it gets approved by the FDA to be given to the public.
 - Approval: the vaccines is tested first, then it gets approved by the FDA, then the vaccine is made, and then the vaccine can be given to the public.

6. What should I do if I have a serious reaction to the COVID-19 vaccine? If you are having a serious reaction, call 911 and contact a doctor. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the FDA asks that anyone who feels seriously ill after getting the vaccine should report their symptoms using the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) at <https://vaers.hhs.gov/data.html>. The CDC also uses a smartphone app called “V-safe” to check-in on people’s health after they get a COVID-19 vaccine. When you get your vaccine, you should also get a V-safe information sheet with how to use the app. You can use this app to report any problems or bad reactions you have after getting a COVID-19 vaccine. Learn more at <https://vsafe.cdc.gov/en/>.

7. What allergic reactions should I look out for after getting the vaccine? A life threatening allergic reaction is called anaphylaxis and needs to be treated with an EpiPen© and a trip to the hospital. A non-life threatening allergic reaction may be a sore arm, hives, swelling, itching, or redness on the area of your arm where you got your vaccine.

8. I had an allergic reaction to my first COVID-19 vaccine shot. Should I get the second one? Do NOT get the second dose of Pfizer or Moderna if you have had an allergic reaction to your first dose of the vaccine. Ask a doctor if you should get a different type of COVID-19 vaccine.

9. Should I get the vaccine if I am allergic to an ingredient in a COVID-19 vaccine? If you are allergic to something in the vaccine, talk to a doctor before getting the vaccination. If you are allergic to polyethylene glycol (PEG), do not get the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine. If you are allergic to polysorbate, do not get the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

10. What should I do if I have allergies not related to vaccines? COVID-19 vaccines do not contain latex, eggs, or gelatin. You do not have to worry if you have allergies to food, medicine, or the environment (like pollen or animals). If you have any questions or concerns, please talk to a doctor or medical professional.

Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 Vaccine

11. Should I be worried about getting the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 (J&J/Janssen) vaccine? The pause on the use of the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine ended on April 23, 2021 and healthcare professionals can now give the vaccine again. The pause was in place because there were some reports of women getting a blood clotting disorder after getting the J&J vaccine. It was found that your chance of getting the blood clotting disorder after you get the J&J vaccine is very rare, and that the risk of blood clotting is much higher if you get sick with COVID-19 than it is if you get the J&J vaccine. The CDC and FDA closely watch this vaccine and provide treatment information to health care professionals and people who get the J&J vaccine. If you have other questions about the J&J vaccine, talk to a medical professional.

12. Am I at risk if I got the Johnson & Johnson vaccine? If you got the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and have not had any of the side effects of the blood clotting disorder (severe headache, confusion, stomach pain, shortness of breath, or leg swelling) within three weeks of being vaccinated, you are likely not at risk. If you have questions or concerns, talk to a doctor or medical professional.

COVID-19 Vaccine and People with Various Health Concerns

13. Is the vaccine harmful for people with cancer, kidney failure, or liver damage? People who have diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, liver disease, lung disease, asthma, and HIV were included in the clinical trials of the COVID-19 vaccines. The vaccine can be safely given to people who have these health conditions. Check with a doctor or healthcare professional to know if the COVID-19 vaccine is safe for you.

14. I have an autoimmune disease. Can I get the vaccine? People with autoimmune conditions were included in the clinical trials for Pfizer and Moderna vaccines and they did not have an immune response to the vaccination. If you have an autoimmune disease, ask a doctor or healthcare professional if the COVID-19 vaccine is safe for you.

15. Is the vaccine safe for organ transplant recipients who take immune-suppressants? We are still learning about the safety of the vaccines for people who take immunosuppressive medications, such as kidney transplant recipients. If you have a transplant, ask a doctor or healthcare professional if the COVID-19 vaccine is safe for you.

16. Can the COVID-19 vaccine cause long-hauler syndrome? No. Long-hauler syndrome is caused by the COVID-19 virus, not the COVID-19 vaccine. Long-hauler syndrome occurs when people, who have been sick with COVID-19, have long term symptoms. The vaccine doesn't contain any live virus so your body will not have the same reaction as it would if you were sick with COVID-19.

17. Will the vaccine cause fertility problems? No. If you are thinking about getting pregnant in the future there is no evidence that the vaccine causes fertility problems.

18. Is it ok to get the COVID-19 vaccine when breastfeeding? Yes. If you are currently pregnant or breastfeeding, there is no evidence that the vaccine causes issues. In fact, breastfeeding people who received COVID-19 mRNA vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna) have antibodies in their breastmilk, which could help protect their babies. There are no reports of breastfeeding babies having side-effects from mom's COVID-19 vaccine. You do not have to pump and throw away your breastmilk after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

Sources:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Vaccines and preventable diseases
2. PA Department of Health
3. COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Plan
4. Public Health Collaborative FAQ <https://publichealthcollaborative.org/faq/>