

COVID-19 vaccine frequently asked questions for patients

January 4, 2021

Q: Should I get vaccinated for COVID-19?

A: We strongly recommend you get vaccinated if you are 18 or older. The vaccine will help protect you from getting COVID-19. If you still get infected after you get vaccinated, the vaccine may prevent serious illness.

Q: When can I get the vaccine?

A: When a vaccine is authorized or approved in the United States, there may not be enough doses available for all adults. Supplies will increase over time, and all adults should be able to get vaccinated later in 2021. The goal is for everyone to be able to easily receive a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as large quantities are available. Several thousand vaccination providers will be available, including doctors' offices, retail pharmacies, hospitals and federally qualified health centers. We will share more information about vaccine distribution when we have it.

Q: What vaccines are available?

A: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines for Emergency Use Authorization. Both vaccines are made with messenger RNA.

Q: What is a messenger RNA vaccine?

A: Messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines are a new type of vaccine to protect against infectious diseases. They teach our cells how to make a protein—or even just a piece of a protein—that triggers an immune response inside our bodies. That immune response, which produces antibodies, is what protects us from getting infected if the real virus enters our bodies.

Q: Why do I need two COVID-19 shots?

A: Currently authorized vaccines, and most vaccines under development, require two doses. The first shot helps the immune system recognize the virus, and the second shot strengthens the immune response. You need both to get the best protection.

Q: Will the shot hurt or make me sick?

A: There may be side effects, but they should go away within a few days. Possible side effects include a sore arm, headache, fever or body aches. This does not mean you have COVID-19. Side effects are signs that the vaccine is working to build immunity. If they don't go away in a week, or you have more serious symptoms, call your doctor.

Q: Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccine?

A: No. You cannot get COVID-19 from the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines because the virus is not used to produce them.

Q: Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?

A: COVID-19 mRNA vaccines go through the same rigorous safety assessment as all vaccines before the FDA approves them for use in the United States. This includes large clinical trials and data review by a safety monitoring board.

Q: If I already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated?

FAQ

A: Yes. CDC recommends that you get vaccinated even if you have already had COVID-19, because you can catch it more than once. While you may have some short-term antibody protection after recovering from COVID-19, we don't know how long this protection will last.

Q: Can my child get vaccinated for COVID-19?

A: No. More studies need to be conducted before COVID-19 vaccines are recommended for children under 18.

Q: Can I take it if I'm pregnant or nursing my baby?

A: The vaccines have not been studied in pregnant or nursing mothers; however, they are expected to be safe. Both the CDC and American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommend that people who are pregnant or nursing receive the vaccine if they choose. Consider discussing possible risks and benefits with your doctor.

Q: Can I get the vaccine if I have food or medication allergies?

A: Allergic reactions to the vaccine are possible. Any person with a severe allergy to any part of the vaccine should not receive it. Since many people are not sure which part of a vaccine they are allergic to, CDC recommends caution if you have a severe allergy to any other vaccine or injectable therapy. You may still receive the COVID-19 vaccine if this is the case but may want to discuss with your doctor first. If you have an allergy to foods or other non-injectable drugs, the vaccine is safe to receive.

Q: Can I take the vaccine if I am allergic to eggs?

A: Yes. Eggs or egg-based ingredients are not used at any point in the production of the Pfizer vaccine. It is safe for people with allergies.

Q: Can I take the vaccination if I'm allergic to penicillin?

A: Yes. There are no ingredients in the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccination that should cause issues in patients with penicillin allergies. The CDC recommends patients with severe allergies get monitored for 15 to 30 minutes after receiving the vaccine as a precaution.

Q: Is the vaccine safe for people with compromised immune systems?

A: Yes. The vaccine has not been studied in immunocompromised people yet; however, there is no reason to expect it to be less safe in this population than in the general population. The CDC recommends that immunocompromised people receive the vaccine if they choose. Because vaccines are often less effective in immunocompromised patients, it is especially important for those who are immunocompromised to continue following distancing and masking recommendations even after they are vaccinated.

Q: Do I need to wear a mask when I receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

A: Yes. CDC recommends that during the pandemic people wear a mask that covers their nose and mouth when in contact with others outside your household, when in healthcare facilities and when receiving any vaccine, including a COVID-19 vaccine. Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unable to remove a mask without assistance should not wear a mask.

Q: Where can I find more information about the COVID-19 vaccine?

A: Please visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).

