

# THE COVID-19 VACCINE: Your Questions Answered

## Responses by:

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### What are the benefits of getting the COVID-19 vaccine?

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Getting the COVID-19 vaccine can help prevent you from getting COVID-19 or from becoming seriously ill or dying due to COVID-19. It can also help prevent the COVID-19 virus from spreading and replicating, which allows it to mutate and possibly become more resistant to vaccines. Wearing masks and social distancing help lower your chance of getting the virus or spreading it to others, but these measures are not enough. The combination of getting vaccinated and following CDC's recommendations to protect yourself and others will offer the best protection from COVID-19.

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### Should I get the vaccination if I already had COVID-19?

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Yes, people who have previously had COVID-19 should get vaccinated. Even if you have already recovered from COVID-19, it is possible to contract COVID again. However, vaccinated individuals are protected against severe disease and death.

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### Can the vaccine give you COVID-19?

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No. The COVID-19 vaccines do not use the live virus that causes COVID-19. As a result, the COVID-19 vaccines cannot cause you to become sick with COVID-19 or shed any vaccine components.

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### Do the COVID-19 vaccines have any side effects?

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Some people may experience side effects after receiving a vaccination. However, this is normal sign that your body is building protection. The most common side effects are minor and include tiredness, headache, pain at the injection site, muscle pain, chills, nausea or fever. Any side effects should subside within a few days.



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### What are the long-term side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine?

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Because COVID-19 vaccines clinical trials only started in the summer of 2020, it is not yet clear if these vaccines will have long-term side effects. However, vaccines rarely cause long-term side effects.

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### Do the COVID-19 vaccines protect against the variants?

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While research suggests that COVID-19 vaccines are slightly less effective against the variants, the vaccines still appear to provide protection against severe COVID-19.

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### What is the difference among the three types of vaccines offered?

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The Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech are mRNA vaccines that use tiny parts called messenger RNA (mRNA) carried in very tiny lipid particles. The Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines differ in the way the mRNA is built or the way the lipids are used. The two vaccines are also stored in different ways, but each requires two doses. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is a vector vaccine, which places genetic material from the COVID-19 virus inside a weakened version of the adenovirus that cannot cause illness. Adenoviruses are very common viruses that usually cause colds. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine requires a single dose.

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### How long does protection from the COVID-19 vaccines last?

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Research continues to help determine how long the COVID-19 vaccines will provide protection.

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### Are there toxic ingredients in the vaccine?

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No, there are no toxic ingredients in vaccines. The FDA ensures that the vaccine is pure and sterile, and they monitor this on an ongoing basis requiring test batches.

**Q How do we know if the vaccines are safe?**

**A** Vaccines go through more testing than any other pharmaceuticals. First, small groups of people receive a trial vaccine. Next, the vaccine is administered to people with certain characteristics such as age, race and health. The vaccine is then given to tens of thousands of people and tested for effectiveness and safety.

The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) studies the data to determine if the vaccine works and is safe. The FDA then looks at the data and the advice from the ACIP and decides whether to approve the vaccine. The vaccine is only approved after all of these steps have been completed, and when the experts are sure that the vaccine is safe and effective. In fact, the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is now FDA approved.

**Q Can I still get COVID-19 after I have been vaccinated?**

**A** COVID-19 vaccination will protect most people from getting sick with COVID-19. A very small percentage of fully vaccinated people may still get COVID-19 if they are exposed to the virus. These are breakthrough cases. The overall risk of hospitalization and death due to COVID-19 is much lower in vaccinated individuals than among unvaccinated people with similar risk factors.

**Q Are these vaccines fully approved by the FDA for use?**

**A** The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is fully approved by the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines are being issued under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) by the FDA. An EUA makes the vaccine available for public health emergencies. It means that the vaccine is available outside of a research study but has not yet reached full FDA approval, which takes some time. This is the typical first step for a new vaccine. The research continues as it moves toward full approval.

**Q I heard the COVID-19 vaccine was developed to control individuals through microchip tracking.**

**A** This is false. There is not a microchip in the vaccine and the vaccine will not track people or gather personal information into a database.

**Q Can pregnant or breast-feeding women get the COVID-19?**

**A** If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, you may choose to get a COVID-19 vaccine. Recent data shows that the benefits of receiving a COVID-19 vaccine for pregnant people outweigh any known or potential risks. Vaccination during pregnancy may help transfer protective antibodies to the baby through the placenta and breastmilk. These antibodies may lower the chance of the baby getting COVID-19. If you have concerns, talk to your health care provider about the risks and benefits.

**Q Will the COVID-19 vaccine prevent me from being able to get pregnant?**

**A** No. People who want to get pregnant in the future may receive the COVID-19 vaccine. COVID-19 vaccines are being studied carefully now and will continue to be studied for many years, similar to other vaccines. There is no evidence that the vaccine affects fertility.

**Q How long after getting the COVID-19 vaccine, does it take to be effective?**

**A** It usually takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination. That means it is possible for a person to contract COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and get sick, but they cannot contract COVID from the vaccination itself.

A person is considered fully vaccinated 14 days after they have received two doses of either the Moderna or Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines or a single dose of the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) vaccine.

**Q Can the COVID-19 vaccine alter your DNA?**

**A** No, the COVID vaccines do not change or interact with your DNA in any way. Vaccines teach our immune system how to fight against a specific virus. They work with the body's natural defenses to safely develop immunity to disease. In order to do its job, the COVID-19 vaccine does not need to go inside the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA is. This means the vaccine never interacts with our DNA in any way and has no way to change it.

