



# COVID-19 VACCINATION FAQ'S

## WHY SHOULD I GET VACCINATED?

The vaccine will help keep you from getting COVID-19 and is a much safer way to help build protection. COVID-19 can have serious, life-threatening complications and there is no way to know how it will affect you or others around you. This is an important tool to help stop this pandemic and keep everyone safe.

## IS THIS VACCINE SAFE?

Yes. The COVID-19 vaccine was developed and tested the same way as every other vaccine used in the United States. Like all vaccines, COVID-19 vaccines have gone through a careful trial process with several phases. For every vaccine in the United States (including COVID-19), trials start with Phases 1 and 2, when small groups of people are vaccinated and then monitored. In Phase 3, tens of thousands of people are vaccinated to be sure the vaccine is both safe and effective for all types of people. After a vaccine is authorized or approved, it enters Phase 4, where long-term effects are studied. These trials, which include people at high risk for COVID-19, will help identify any common side effects or other safety concerns and will help clarify how long protection lasts after vaccination.

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

The vaccinations being used are considered mRNA vaccines. The mRNA tells the cells to make a harmless piece called a “spike protein”. The immune system recognizes that the protein does not belong there and begins building an immune response by producing antibodies. At the end, our bodies have learned how to protect against future infection, and you will have protection without having to get sick with COVID-19.

## IS COVID IN THE VACCINE AND DOES IT AFFECT OUR DNA?

mRNA vaccines do not use the live virus that causes COVID-19 and do not affect or interact with our DNA in anyway. The vaccine cannot give someone COVID-19.

## HOW DID THEY DO THIS SO FAST?

mRNA vaccines are a product of decades of studies on RNA therapies and treatments and have been used to develop successful personalized cancer treatments, as well as vaccines for infectious diseases such as Zika virus. There was also a lot of groundwork laid during the search for SARS (2002) and MERS (2012) vaccines. Therefore, scientists did not start at square one. Researchers also benefited from a budget of \$4.5 billion from the US government, which gave manufacturers all the resources they needed to accelerate their process.

## **FAQ's CONTINUED...**

### **WERE STEPS SKIPPED TO GET THIS APPROVED?**

No steps were skipped and over 75,000 individuals of different ages, races, and ethnicities, including those with underlying medical conditions, were part of the trials for the two vaccine options available. Development of vaccines in the US are strictly controlled by the FDA, who agreed to allow emergency use of the COVID-19 vaccinations we have available today. Vaccines, regardless of timeline, must meet the highest standards of safety and have minimal side effects. The US currently has the safest, most effective vaccines in its history.

### **MANY SHOTS AM I GOING TO NEED?**

With the Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccinations, two shots are needed for the best protection, which are given 3-4 weeks apart.

### **WHY DO I NEED TWO SHOTS?**

The first shot primes the immune system, helping it recognize the virus, and the second shot strengthens the immune response. With the two, approximately a 95% effective rate was achieved for preventing COVID-19. The measles and polio vaccinations are two examples of vaccinations that have proven to be more effective with multiple doses.

### **IF I HAD COVID-19, DO I STILL NEED TO GET VACCINATED?**

Yes. Due to severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that re-infection is possible, vaccination should be obtained regardless of whether you have already had it. Some early evidence suggests that natural immunity from having COVID-19 may not last very long. Anyone currently infected should wait to get vaccinated until after their illness has resolved and criteria to discontinue isolation has been met.

### **WHAT IS THE COST?**

There will be no cost. Any administration fees can be reimbursed by your public or private insurance company. For uninsured individuals, the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund will cover any potential administrative fees.

### **HOW OFTEN WILL WE NEED THIS?**

The length of protection is still being studied due to this being a new disease. We do know that COVID-19 has caused very serious illness and death for a lot of people and if you get sick you also risk giving it to loved ones who may get very sick. Getting a vaccine is the much safer choice.

## FAQ's CONTINUED...

### WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF THE VACCINATION?

As of Fall 2020, fewer than 10% of participants experienced side effects. The most common side effect is soreness around the injection site, which is typical for most vaccines. Some people experienced fatigue, joint pain, headache, and short-term fever. This short-term discomfort is the effect of your body developing immunity and is normal. This discomfort does not mean that the vaccine has given you COVID-19. Even if you experience discomfort after the first dose of vaccine, it is very important that you still receive the second dose a few weeks later for the vaccine to be effective.

### SHOULD I BE GETTING THE COVID-19 VACCINE IF I HAVE OTHER MEDICAL CONDITIONS?

If you have an underlying medical condition, such as diabetes, asthma, or obesity, you may be at higher risk for severe COVID-19. When COVID-19 vaccine is available, you are encouraged to get vaccinated to protect yourself from serious COVID-19 illness.

### THREE GROUPS OF PEOPLE HAVE SPECIAL COVID-19 VACCINE CONCERNS AND SHOULD SPEAK TO THEIR PHYSICIAN PRIOR:

1. People with weakened immune systems due to HIV or other illnesses or medications can receive COVID-19 vaccine, but they should be aware that there is only limited safety data available and that they may have a lower immune response to the vaccine.
2. People with some autoimmune conditions are also able to be vaccinated but also need to be aware of the limited safety data for people in their category.
3. People with a neurologic disease history of having previously had either Guillain-Barre syndrome or Bell's palsy can receive COVID-19 vaccine but need to be closely monitored for the re-development of one of those conditions.

### I HAVE ALLERGIES NOT RELATED TO VACCINES, SHOULD I GET THIS?

CDC recommends that people with a history of severe allergic reactions not related to vaccines or injectable medications—such as food, pet, venom, environmental, or latex allergies—get vaccinated. People with a history of allergies to oral medications or a family history of severe allergic reactions may also get vaccinated.

### WHAT IS IN THE VACCINES?

**THE PFIZER-BIONTECH COVID-19 VACCINE** includes the following ingredients: mRNA, lipids ((4-hydroxybutyl)azanediyl)bis(hexane-6,1-diyl)bis(2-hexyldecanoate), 2 [(polyethylene glycol)-2000]-N,N-ditetradecylacetamide, 1,2-Distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine, and cholesterol), potassium chloride, monobasic potassium phosphate, sodium chloride, dibasic sodium phosphate dihydrate, and sucrose.

**THE MODERNA COVID-19 VACCINE** contains the following ingredients: mRNA, lipids (SM-102, polyethylene glycol [PEG] 2000 dimyristoyl glycerol [DMG], cholesterol, and 1,2-distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine [DSPC]), tromethamine, tromethamine hydrochloride, acetic acid, sodium acetate, and sucrose.

## FAQ's CONTINUED...

### WHO SHOULD NOT GET VACCINATED?

People who are allergic to polyethylene glycol (PEG), polysorbate, or any ingredient in the vaccinations (listed above) should not get an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine.

People who have severe allergic reactions or immediate allergic reactions such as hives, swelling, or wheezing (respiratory distress) within four hours to the first dose of the vaccine, should not get another dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine.

Individuals under 16 years of age for the Pfizer vaccination and under 18 years of age for the Moderna vaccination should not be vaccinated.

### WHAT SAFEGUARDS ARE IN PLACE DURING ADMINISTRATION?

All individuals will be monitored on site for at least 15 minutes after getting the vaccine. If there is a history of severe allergic reactions to injections for the individual, they will be monitored for at least 30 minutes. Trained emergency personnel will be available with appropriate medications and equipment, such as epinephrine, antihistamines, stethoscopes, blood pressure cuffs, and timing devices for pulse checks.

### I AM PREGNANT OR LACTATING, SHOULD I GET THE VACCINE? HOW ABOUT PLANNING TO BE, IS INFERTILITY AN ISSUE?

Yes. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommend that COVID-19 vaccines should not be withheld from pregnant individuals who meet criteria for vaccination. COVID-19 vaccines should also be offered to lactating individuals similar to non-lactating individuals when they meet criteria for receipt of the vaccine. Several vaccines have safely been given to pregnant and lactating individuals for decades.

Given the mechanism of action and the safety profile of the vaccine in non-pregnant individuals, COVID-19 mRNA vaccines are not thought to cause an increased risk of infertility.

### WHAT IS THE VACCINATION PROCESS FOR HEALTHCARE PERSONNEL/EMPLOYEES?

We are in constant contact with the local health department and are providing them lists of individuals who are willing and eligible to become vaccinated as requested. Please be sure you've taken the vaccination survey. When vaccination resources within the local health department become available, the employee is then loaded into a system called Vaccine Administration Management System (VAMS). When this occurs, the employee will receive a registration email sent to them from [vams@cdc.gov](mailto:vams@cdc.gov) with a link to register their account (please be sure to check the junk or spam folder). The employee will then use their VAMS access to register, schedule an appointment, track the follow up vaccination, and receive proof of vaccination. An email is required for anyone to be vaccinated during this phase.

### SOURCES

CDC  
[cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/](https://cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/)

VDH  
[vdh.virginia.gov/covid-19](https://vdh.virginia.gov/covid-19)

AGOC  
[acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance](https://acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance)