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FAQs About the Vaccines for Older Adults

As an older adult, you are at greater risk of being hospitalized or dying if you get COVID-19. These frequently asked questions will help you understand more about the available vaccines and build your vaccine confidence. They will also help you learn the steps to get vaccinated so that you can feel safe and confident.

When should older adults get a COVID-19 vaccine?

- Because older adults are at higher risk of severe COVID-19, the CDC recommends that adults age 65 and older get vaccinated as soon as possible.

How do I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

- Covid-19 vaccines are now here for everyone age 12 and older.
- You have three ways to find vaccines near you:
 - You can search for vaccines near you at [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov).
 - Text your ZIP code to 438829
 - Call 1-800-232-0233

What can I expect at my COVID-19 vaccination appointment?

- When getting your vaccine, wear a mask and stay at least 6 feet apart from others.
- You should receive a paper or electronic version of a fact sheet that tells you more about the specific COVID-19 vaccine you are being offered.
 - The fact sheet contains information to help you understand the risks and benefits of receiving that specific vaccine.
- You should receive a vaccination record card or printout that tells you which COVID-19 vaccine you received, the date you received it, the vaccine lot number, and where you received it.
 - You should bring the card with you for your second vaccine shot, if two shots are needed.
 - Keep the record card in a safe place in case you need it later to show you have been vaccinated.
- You should be monitored onsite for at least 15 minutes after being vaccinated for a rare but serious allergic reaction.

If the vaccine I got requires a second shot, how do I schedule the second shot?

- Ideally, you should have a second shot appointment scheduled before you leave the place where you got your first shot.
- If you don't have an appointment for a second shot or you are not sure, contact the location that set up your first appointment for help. This may be your state or local health department, hospital, pharmacy, or other vaccine provider.
- Johnson & Johnson's Janssen COVID-19 vaccine only requires one shot. The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines require two shots to get the most protection. The timing between your first and second shot depends on which vaccine you received:
 - You should get your second Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine shot no earlier than 21 days after your first shot.
 - You should get your second Moderna vaccine shot no earlier than 28 days after your first shot.
- You should **get your second shot as close to the recommended time interval as possible.**

Does it cost anything to get the vaccine?

- There is no cost to you to get a COVID-19 vaccine. If you have Medicare, bring your Medicare card to your vaccine appointment so the vaccine provider can bill Medicare.

How do COVID-19 vaccines work?

- Vaccines teach your cells how to make a harmless protein that your immune system knows doesn't belong in your body. Your immune system responds by producing antibodies, which protect you against infection should the real virus enter your body.
- COVID-19 vaccines can't give you COVID-19 because they don't contain the live virus that causes COVID-19.
- COVID-19 vaccines don't affect your DNA. You can find more information about COVID-19 vaccines and how they work on [CDC website](#).

Are there side effects with taking the COVID-19 vaccines?

- Side effects from the vaccines are common, particularly after the second shot of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines.
- Side effects may include fever, feeling tired, headache, muscle pain, joint pain, chills, and pain or swelling on the arm where you got the shot.
- These side effects are usually mild and should last at most a few days.

Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe?

- Yes. Millions of people in the United States have already received authorized COVID-19 vaccines that met FDA's rigorous, scientific standards for safety and effectiveness.
- The FDA and CDC continue to monitor vaccine safety now that the vaccines are in use.
- COVID-19 vaccines can't give you COVID-19.

Can I get a COVID-19 vaccine if I have a medical condition or take medications for other medical conditions?

- People with underlying medical conditions can receive the FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines as long as they haven't had an immediate or severe allergic reaction to a COVID-19 vaccine or to any of the ingredients in the vaccines.
- Vaccination is an important consideration for people with certain underlying medical conditions because they are at increased risk for severe COVID-19.

SAFETY IS THE TOP PRIORITY

The FDA and CDC have the highest standards when it comes to ensuring the safety and effectiveness of vaccines. Their process includes the following procedures:

- ✓ Scientists must first test vaccines extensively in medical studies to ensure they are safe and effective.
- ✓ Before the FDA authorizes a vaccine for use among the public, it ensures its safety by independently:
 - Reviewing the data from the medical studies, and
 - Inspecting the manufacturing facilities.
- ✓ Even after a vaccine has been authorized, the FDA and CDC closely monitor vaccine administration to identify even rare side effects or reactions.
- ✓ The FDA and CDC closely review any reports of side effects or reactions and share these facts with the public.

The extremely rare cases of blood clotting following Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine—just a small number of cases out of millions of vaccinations—show that the FDA and CDC's vaccine safety monitoring systems work and catch even the rarest of reactions.

A thorough investigation has confirmed that Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine is safe and effective.

And doctors have been notified and trained to understand the signs to watch for and the proper course of treatment if blood clots occur.



After I'm fully vaccinated, do I need to continue to wear a mask and stay 6 feet apart from people who don't live with me?

- According to CDC, if you're fully vaccinated (2 weeks after your final dose), you DON'T have to wear a mask indoors or outdoors in public (except in health care settings), and you DON'T have to keep your distance from other people.
- Until you're fully vaccinated, you should continue to:
 - Wear a mask when inside public places.
 - Keep at least 6 feet part from people who don't live with you and who may not be vaccinated.
 - Avoid crowds.
 - Avoid poorly ventilated spaces.
 - Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- Vaccinated and unvaccinated people must still follow federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial laws, rules, and regulations. That includes public transportation, airport/airplane, local business, and workplace guidance.
- Also, if you have a medical condition or you take medicines that weaken your immune system, you may NOT be fully protected from COVID-19 even if you're fully vaccinated. Talk to your health care provider. Even after vaccination, you may need to continue taking precautions.

What if I have more questions?

- If you have more questions around getting a COVID-19 vaccine, visit the [CDC website](https://www.cdc.gov).