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Top 20 Frequently Asked Questions About COVID-19

How do COVID-19 vaccines work?

The vaccines help your body to build immunity to the virus that causes COVID-19 without getting the disease. They train your immune system to recognize and destroy the COVID virus. That's called immunity, and it keeps the virus from making us sick. Different types of vaccines work in different ways, but all types of vaccines leave your body with the ability to quickly produce a supply of special proteins called antibodies that will fight the virus if you're exposed to it.

What are the side effects of COVID-19 vaccines?

The COVID-19 vaccines can cause temporary side effects like fever, headache, feeling tired, sore arm, or chills. They usually last just a few days and go away on their own. These side effects show that the vaccine is working. They happen when your body is building protection against the virus.

Why do I need to get a vaccine if I have a 99% chance of surviving COVID-19?

It's much safer to take the vaccine and avoid getting COVID-19 altogether, because the disease can have serious, life-threatening complications. If you become infected with COVID-19, you may develop health problems that last your whole life. You can also infect others if you're infected yourself. With millions of people contracting COVID-19 in the United States, a 99% survival rate still means hundreds of thousands will die.

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.

Will a COVID-19 vaccine affect my ability to have healthy children?

No, messenger RNA (mRNA), the active ingredient in the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines, never enters a cell's nucleus where DNA resides. The vaccines only train your body to recognize and destroy the COVID virus.

How do I know the vaccine won't give me COVID-19?

It's impossible to get COVID from any of the vaccines in use or in testing in the United States. None of these vaccines contains the live virus that causes COVID-19, so they can't make you sick with the disease. The vaccines train your body to recognize and destroy the COVID virus, but they don't contain the virus.

Why should I get a vaccine that isn't 100% effective?

COVID-19 is a serious, contagious disease. Taking one of the currently available vaccines reduces the likelihood that you'll get infected. It also protects others by reducing your chance of spreading the virus to them.

Why should I get a COVID-19 vaccine if I still will be able to transmit the virus?

A COVID-19 vaccine reduces the likelihood that you'll get infected yourself, so you'll also be less likely to infect others. Experts are monitoring the vaccines to see exactly how much they reduce the spread of COVID-19.

How can a vaccine be developed so quickly and still be safe?

Because this pandemic is so dangerous, vaccines are being produced at the same time that they are being tested in the final phases of clinical trials. This makes it possible for vaccines to complete all safety and effectiveness testing and be ready for the public in a much shorter time than is typical.

Are the vaccines safe for someone who has a weakened immune system?

The vaccines are important for people with weakened immune systems because they may be at higher risk for getting a severe case of COVID-19. However, they might not develop as strong an immunity to the disease as people with healthy immune systems after they take the vaccine. Also, safety information, or data, is not yet available for this group of people.

Are the vaccines safe for pregnant people?

Scientists are still studying the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in pregnant people. But based on how these vaccines work in the body, experts believe they are unlikely to pose a specific risk for people who are pregnant. If you are pregnant, you may choose to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Pregnant people who get COVID-19 are at increased risk for severe illness and for pregnancy complications.

Why are people having allergic reactions to the COVID-19 vaccine?

A small number of people receiving the COVID-19 vaccination have reported an allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. Most people who've gotten COVID vaccinations, including people with a history of serious allergic reactions to foods, venoms, or other substances not related to vaccines, have taken the vaccine without complications. People who have a history of anaphylaxis or severe allergic reaction to other vaccines should ask their health care provider about whether to get the vaccine.

Where I am in line for a vaccine?

Vaccines are here now and everyone age 16 and older in the United States can get them. Find out where you can get a vaccine near you at [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov).

How much will the COVID-19 vaccine cost me?

Vaccines are free for the public.

Who shouldn't get COVID-19 vaccines?

Everyone over age 16 should get a COVID-19 vaccine, except people who have a history of severe allergic reactions to ingredients in the COVID-19 vaccines. People with serious allergies to other vaccines or injections should talk to their doctor before getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

Do the vaccines work on the mutations of the COVID virus that have recently appeared?

Scientists are studying variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 to see whether existing vaccines will protect people against them. So far, there's no evidence that the mutated viruses cause more severe illness or higher risk of death.

Why is there a heavy focus on vaccinating the Black community?

People of color who get COVID-19 are nearly 4 times as likely as non-Hispanic White people to be hospitalized and nearly 3 times as likely to die from the disease. It's important to vaccinate people with higher risks as soon as possible to reduce serious and fatal cases of the disease and to slow the spread.

Does the COVID-19 vaccine cause Bell's palsy?

The FDA hasn't found that the small number of Bell's palsy cases reported during clinical trials of messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines were caused by the vaccination because clinical trial volunteers weren't any more likely to get the condition than people in the general population. Bell's palsy is a temporary condition and symptoms usually resolve themselves in a short time or can be treated with medication.

Do I need to get a COVID-19 vaccine if I've already had COVID-19?

Yes. Scientists don't yet know how long natural antibodies in people who've had COVID-19 will protect them from being reinfected.

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

There are several benefits to getting a COVID-19 vaccine:

- A COVID-19 vaccine will reduce your risk of getting COVID-19.
- Getting a vaccine may also help keep you from getting seriously ill even if you do get COVID-19.
- Getting vaccinated yourself may also protect people around you.
- A COVID-19 vaccine is a safer way to help build protection than catching the disease.
- A COVID-19 vaccine is an important way to help stop the pandemic, along with wearing a mask and staying 6 feet apart from people who don't live with you.

What can I do once I'm fully vaccinated?

After you're fully vaccinated (2 weeks after your final dose) you can start doing many things that you had stopped doing because of the pandemic. However, you should continue to wear a mask in indoor public places, stay at least 6 feet apart from people who don't live with you and who may not be vaccinated, avoid crowded and poorly ventilated spaces, and wash your hands frequently. Learn more at [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).