THE COVID-19 VACCINE: YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

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Why is a COVID-19 vaccine needed if social distancing and wearing masks prevent the COVID-19 virus from spreading?

Vaccines boost your immune system, so it will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. Vaccination combined with ongoing prevention efforts including wearing face masks that cover the mouth and nose, frequent hand washing and staying at least 6 feet away from others offer the best protection against COVID-19.

What are the ingredients in the COVID-19 vaccine?

Vaccine ingredients vary by manufacturer. None of the vaccines contain eggs, gelatin, latex, or preservatives. All COVID-19 vaccines are free from metals such as iron, nickel, cobalt, lithium, and rare earth alloys. They are also free from manufactured products such as microelectronics, electrodes, carbon nanotubes, or nanowire semiconductors.

How long does protection from a COVID-19 vaccine last?

We don't know how long protection lasts for those who are vaccinated. What we do know is that COVID-19 has caused very serious illness and death for a lot of people. If you get COVID-19, you also risk giving it to loved ones who may get very sick.

People with moderately to severely compromised immune systems should receive an additional dose of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine after the initial 2 doses.

Can I choose which COVID-19 vaccine I get?

Yes. All currently authorized and recommended COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective, and CDC does not recommend one vaccine over another. The most important decision is to get a COVID-19 vaccination as soon as possible. *Widespread vaccination is a critical tool to help stop the pandemic.*

People should be aware that a risk of a rare condition called thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS) has been reported following vaccination with the J&J/Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine. TTS is a serious condition that involves blood clots with low platelet counts. This problem is rare, and most reports were in women between 18 and 49 years old. For women 50 years and older and men of any age, this problem is even more rare. There are other COVID-19 vaccine options available for which this risk has not been seen (Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna).

Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?

No. None of the vaccines contain the live virus that causes COVID-19. This means that a COVID-19 vaccine cannot make you sick with COVID-19. It typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity (protection against the virus that causes COVID-19) after vaccination. A person is not considered fully vaccinated until two weeks after the last dose. That means it's possible a person could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and still get sick. This is because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection.

What are normal side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine?

When you get a COVID-19 vaccine, you can expect mild side effects, including soreness, swelling or redness at the injection site. Other common side effects are fever, chills, headache, tiredness, and muscle or joint pain. These side effects are normal as your body creates an immune response to protect you from COVID-19 and may increase with the second dose for the two-dose vaccines.

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

Yes, you should be vaccinated regardless of whether you already had COVID-19 because:

- Research has not yet shown how long you are protected from getting COVID-19 again after you recover from COVID-19.
- Vaccination helps protect you even if you've already had COVID-19.

Evidence is emerging that people get better protection by being fully vaccinated compared with having had COVID-19. One study showed that unvaccinated people who already had COVID-19 are more than 2 times as likely than fully vaccinated people to get COVID-19 again.

If I have an underlying condition, can I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

People with underlying medical conditions can receive a COVID-19 vaccine as long as they have not had an immediate or severe allergic reaction to a COVID-19 vaccine or to any of the ingredients in the vaccine. Vaccination is an important consideration for adults of any age with certain underlying medical conditions because they are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

If I am pregnant or planning to become pregnant, can I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for all people 12 years and older, including people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, trying to get pregnant now, or might become pregnant in the future. You might want to have a conversation with your healthcare provider about COVID-19 vaccination.

Why should my child get vaccinated against COVID-19?

Vaccination can help protect your child from getting COVID-19. Although fewer children have been sick with

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COVID-19 compared to adults, children can be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, can get sick from COVID-19, and can spread the virus that causes COVID-19 to others. Getting your child vaccinated helps to protect your child and your family. Vaccination is now recommended for everyone 12 years and older. Currently, the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine is the only one available to children 12 years and older.COVID-19 vaccines have been used under the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history, including studies in children 12 years and older.

Can I get vaccinated against COVID-19 while I am currently sick with COVID-19?

No. People with COVID-19 who have symptoms should wait to be vaccinated until they have recovered from their illness and have met the criteria for discontinuing isolation; those without symptoms should also wait until they meet the criteria before getting vaccinated. This guidance also applies to people who get COVID-19 before getting their second dose of vaccine.

People who have had a known COVID-19 exposure should not seek vaccination until their quarantine period has ended to avoid potentially exposing healthcare personnel and others during the vaccination visit. This recommendation also applies to people with a known COVID-19 exposure who have received their first dose of an mRNA vaccine but not their second.

How long do I need to wait after getting another vaccine before getting a COVID-19 vaccine?

You can get a COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines at the same visit. You no longer need to wait 14 days between vaccinations. Experience with other vaccines has shown that the way our bodies develop protection, known as an immune response, after getting vaccinated and possible side effects of vaccines are generally the same when given alone or with other vaccines.

How many doses of the vaccine will I need to get?

The number of doses needed depends on which vaccine you receive. To get the most protection:

- Two Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine doses should be given 3 weeks (21 days) apart.
- Two Moderna vaccine doses should be given 1 month (28 days) apart.
- Johnson & Johnsons Jansen (J&J/Janssen) COVID-19 vaccine requires only one dose.

If you receive a vaccine that requires two doses, you should get your second shot as close to the recommended interval as possible. However, your second dose may be given up to 6 weeks (42 days) after the first dose, if necessary. You should not get the second dose earlier than the recommended interval.

People with moderately to severely compromised immune systems should receive an additional dose of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine after the initial 2 doses.

How long does it take for the vaccines to work?

Individuals are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after their second dose in a two-dose series, like the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or two weeks after a single-dose vaccine, like Johnson & Johnson's vaccine, according to the CDC. If it has been less than two weeks since your vaccination, or if you still need to get your second dose, you are not fully protected. Continue all prevention measures, including wearing face masks that cover the mouth, nose and chin, and social distancing, until you are fully vaccinated.

Do I need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others if I am fully vaccinated?

After you are fully vaccinated for COVID-19, take these steps to protect yourself and others:

- In general, you do not need to wear a mask in outdoor settings.
- If you are in an area with high numbers of COVID-19 cases, consider wearing a mask in crowded outdoor settings and when you are in close contact with others who are not fully vaccinated.
- If you have a condition or taking medications that weaken your immune system, you may not be fully protected even if you are fully vaccinated. You should continue to take all precautions recommended for unvaccinated people, including wearing a well-fitted mask, until advised otherwise by their healthcare provider.
- If you are fully vaccinated, to maximize protection from the Delta variant and prevent possibly spreading it to others, wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an area of substantial or high transmission.

Can other vaccines help prevent me from getting COVID-19?

Other vaccines, such as those for flu, measles, or other diseases, will not protect you from COVID-19. Only the vaccines designed specifically to protect you from COVID-19, once approved for use by the FDA, can prevent COVID-19. While a flu vaccine will not prevent you from getting COVID-19, it can prevent you from getting influenza (flu) at the same time as COVID-19. Because the flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 will both be spreading during this time, getting a flu vaccine is more crucial than ever.

**Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Ohio Department of Health (ODH) websites. To learn more visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html or https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/resources/general-resources/frequently-asked-questions+covid-19-vaccine.*