

# COVID-19 VACCINE

## COMMON QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

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

It may hurt a little where you got the shot. You may also be tired, get a fever, and have head or body aches. These side effects are good! They are signs that the vaccine is working and your body is building immunity. Very rarely, a person has an allergic reaction to the vaccine right after getting it. To keep these people safe, healthcare providers have patients wait 15-30 minutes before leaving the vaccination area.

### **Can the vaccine give me or my family COVID-19?**

No. None of the COVID-19 vaccines being used in the United States have live viruses, so they can't give you the disease. And because you won't have the live virus, you can't give it to your family.

### **How does the COVID-19 vaccine work?**

Right now, there are two approved vaccines, from the Pfizer and Moderna companies. Both work the same way. The vaccines contain a small piece of the virus, usually a spike from its surface, or genetic instructions to make the spike. Getting the vaccine trains your body's immune system to recognize the spike and kill any viruses with it.

### **How can a safe vaccine be ready so quickly?**

For two main reasons. First, because of the pandemic, scientists all over the world cooperated on a single goal: find a vaccine as quickly as possible. Second, the U.S. government paid drug companies a lot of money—over \$12 billion—so there was no financial risk for them to develop the vaccine. That meant that scientists could start each of the 4 stages of testing as soon as there was safety data from the last one. Creating new drugs is very expensive, around \$1.3 billion per drug, so companies usually wait after each stage to figure out if the drug will pay for itself.

### **I don't trust the government to give me health information.**

Talk with your healthcare provider about your concerns and ask them for alternative sources of health information. Medical associations, nonprofit organizations,

community groups, and universities all provide good online COVID-19 vaccine resources.

### **If I get the vaccine, will I be part of an experiment without my consent?**

By law, no one can include you in an experiment without explaining the study and getting your written permission. The laws were passed in the 1970s after some shameful history. In the 1930s, the Tuskegee Project signed up 400 Black men with syphilis, telling them they would get health services. They didn't tell them they were doing research to see what happened when the disease was left untreated. In the 1950s, in Puerto Rico, poor, young women were given birth control, but not told about the possible side effects. The laws that now protect human subjects require researchers to tell people what they are doing and get their informed consent. They also require that special committees review every study.

### **Does the vaccine have something in it to track or control people?**

The COVID-19 vaccine does not stay in your body, so there is nothing in it that can track or control you. Getting the vaccine trains your body's immune system to recognize a spike on the virus and kill any viruses with it. In that training process, all the original material from the vaccine is destroyed. To make sure residents stay healthy, Massachusetts does keep track of all immunizations in a confidential database. By law, only healthcare providers and public health officials can see it.

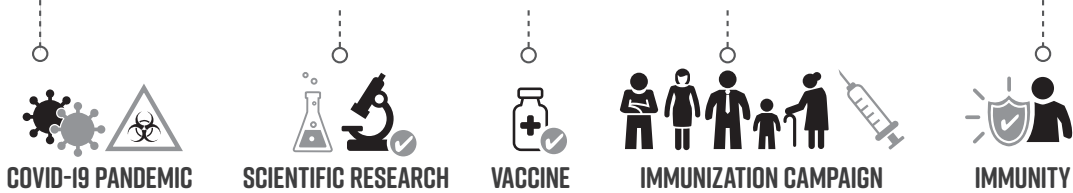
### **I don't need a vaccine. My immunity is already strong, or I use natural remedies.**

It's great that you are already healthy. But COVID-19 is a new virus that your body hasn't encountered before. Getting the vaccine will train your body's immune system to recognize and kill it if you are exposed.

### **I don't need a vaccine because for most young/healthy people, COVID-19 isn't very serious.**

Some young and healthy people have very serious cases of COVID-19 and can even die from it. Others don't even realize they have it. These people are actually the ones who spread COVID-19 the most. Scientists think

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about 60% of cases are caught from someone without symptoms. So even if you are young and/or healthy, getting the vaccine will stop the virus from spreading to others, including older family members and those with health conditions.

### **Does the vaccine stay in my body?**

No. The vaccine trains your body to recognize the virus and kill it. In that training process, all the original material from the vaccine is destroyed.

### **How long will immunity last?**

Scientists don't know yet. It may be a couple years. If this is the case, people may need to be vaccinated every year, as is done with influenza.

### **Has anyone died from the COVID-19 vaccine?**

No one has died from the COVID-19 vaccine in the United States. In Norway, some patients in their 80s and with existing medical conditions or who were terminally ill died after getting the vaccine. Scientists don't know why yet. If it was related to the vaccine, it may have been because they were already very weak and their conditions were worsened by common side effects such as fever, nausea, or diarrhea. If you fall into this high-risk category, talk with your healthcare provider about what to do.

### **I always get sick from the flu shot, so vaccines are not good for me.**

Vaccine side effects such as being tired, getting a fever, and having head or body aches are signs the vaccine is working and your body is building immunity. Isn't it better to feel a little sick from the flu shot than to be one of the 12,000-61,000 people who die from influenza every year? And isn't it better to feel a little sick from the COVID-19 vaccine than to be one of the almost half million Americans who have already died from the disease?

### **I already had COVID-19. Do I still need the vaccine?**

Yes. You can get infected with COVID-19 a second time. Scientists still don't know how long natural immunity lasts. So it is safest for you and your loved ones if you get vaccinated. Please

note that if you were treated with monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma, you should wait 90 days before getting the vaccine.

### **Who pays for the COVID-19 vaccine? What if I am uninsured?**

All residents of the United States are entitled to free COVID-19 vaccination. As part of its payments to drug companies, the U.S. government bought millions of doses of the vaccine and will buy many more. Whether you have private insurance, public insurance, or no insurance, you and your family can get vaccinated against COVID-19 free of charge.

### **My risk from the vaccine is greater than my risk of getting very sick or dying from COVID.**

The facts don't agree. Millions of people in the U.S. have already been vaccinated. A very, very, very small number have had allergic reactions. None have died from them. Compare that to the almost half million Americans who've already died from COVID-19.

### **Can getting the COVID-19 vaccine affect my immigration status in any way?**

It's important that everyone get vaccinated, including immigrants, regardless of their status. The federal government will not impose any immigration consequences for getting the COVID-19 vaccine. This includes being considered a public charge, even if you get it through a program like Medicaid. Federal and state laws require that healthcare providers keep patients' personal information confidential.

### **The vaccine is just another way for pharmaceutical companies to make money.**

The U.S. government paid the drug companies over \$12 billion so they could develop and make the first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. During the pandemic, the vaccine will be free so that as many people as possible get immunized.

### **I'm trying to have a baby, pregnant or nursing. Should I still get the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Getting the vaccine has not made women infertile. Pregnant women are at higher risk for severe COVID-19 if they get the disease. But scientists

don't yet have long-term data on pregnancy or nursing and the vaccine. Doctors and nurses recommend that pregnant and nursing women get the COVID-19 vaccine if they have a health condition or are an essential worker. Others may want to talk with their healthcare providers about what's best for them and their babies.

**Has the vaccine been tested on people like me?**

Yes. The Moderna vaccine was tested on 30,000 people, slightly more men than women, 10.2% of whom were Black and 20.5% Latinx. The Pfizer vaccine was tested on 37,000 people, evenly split between men and women, 9% of whom were Black and 27% Latinx. Almost half of the people in the Pfizer trial had a condition such as obesity, diabetes, or heart disease.

**Does the vaccine have any non-halal or non-kosher ingredients?**

The vaccines do not include any pork, blood, or egg products.

**Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for people with health conditions or who take medicine?**

The vaccine is safe for people with health conditions or who take medicine. It may not work as well if you have immune system or neurological problem. It also may not work as well if you take steroids or other drugs for inflammation.

**How quickly does the two-dose vaccine protect you from COVID-19?**

After both doses, most people's bodies can kill the COVID-19 virus. But scientists aren't sure if you can still pass COVID-19 to others—even if you don't get sick. So you should still follow the rules about how to be safe during the pandemic.