



## COVID-19 Vaccines FAQ

### Top Questions

#### Should I get vaccinated for COVID-19?

I strongly recommend you get vaccinated. The vaccine will help protect you from getting COVID-19. If you still get infected after you get vaccinated, the vaccine may prevent serious illness. By getting vaccinated, you can also help protect people around you.

#### Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?

No. None of the COVID-19 vaccines currently authorized for use or in development in the United States use the live virus that causes COVID-19. However, it typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination. That means it's possible you could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and get sick.

#### Can my child get vaccinated for COVID-19?

No. More studies need to be conducted before COVID-19 vaccines are recommended for children aged 16 and younger.

#### Is it safe to get a COVID-19 vaccine if I have an underlying medical condition?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccination is especially important for people with underlying health problems like heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, and obesity. People with these conditions are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19.

#### Is it better to get natural immunity to COVID-19 rather than immunity from a vaccine?

No. While you may have some short-term antibody protection after recovering from COVID-19, we don't know how long this protection lasts. Vaccination is the best protection, and it is safe. People

who get COVID-19 can have serious illnesses, and some have debilitating symptoms that persist for months.

## Why do I need two COVID-19 shots?

Currently authorized vaccines, and most vaccines under development, require two doses of vaccine. The first shot helps the immune system recognize the virus, and the second shot strengthens the immune response. You need both to get the best protection.

## Will the shot hurt or make me sick?

There may be side effects, but they should go away within a few days. Possible side effects include a sore arm, headache, fever, or body aches. This does not mean you have COVID-19. Side effects are signs that the vaccine is working to build immunity. If they don't go away in a week, or you have more serious symptoms, call your doctor.

## Are there long-term side effects from COVID-19 vaccine?

Because all COVID-19 vaccines are new, it will take more time and more people getting vaccinated to learn about very rare or possible long-term side effects. The good news is, at least 8 weeks' worth of safety data were gathered in the clinical trials for all the authorized vaccines, and it's unusual for vaccine side effects to appear more than 8 weeks after vaccination.

## How do I know if COVID-19 vaccine is safe?

All COVID-19 vaccines were tested in clinical trials involving tens of thousands of people to make sure they meet safety standards and protect adults of different ages, races, and ethnicities. There were no serious safety concerns. CDC and the FDA will keep monitoring the vaccines to look for safety issues after they are authorized and in use.

## How do I report a problem or bad reaction after getting the COVID-19 vaccine?

CDC and FDA encourage the public to report possible side effects (called adverse events) to the [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System \(VAERS\)](#). This national system collects these data to look for adverse events that are unexpected, appear to happen more often than expected, or have unusual patterns of occurrence. Learn about the [difference between a vaccine side effect and an adverse event](#). Reports to VAERS help CDC monitor the safety of vaccines. Safety is a top priority.

Healthcare providers will be required to report certain adverse events following vaccination to VAERS. Healthcare providers also have to adhere to any revised safety reporting requirements according to FDA's conditions of authorized use throughout the duration of any Emergency Use Authorization; these requirements would be posted on [FDA's website](#).

[CDC is implementing a new smartphone-based tool called v-safe to check-in on people's health after they receive a COVID-19 vaccine](#). When you receive your vaccine, you should also receive a **v-safe** information sheet telling you how to enroll in **v-safe**. If you enroll, you will receive regular text messages directing you to surveys where you can report any problems or adverse reactions you have after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine.

## When will COVID-19 vaccines be available to me in the U.S.?

The first supply became available before the end of 2020. Currently, two vaccines are authorized and recommended to prevent COVID-19 in the United States. To help guide decisions about how to distribute limited initial supplies of COVID-19 vaccine, CDC and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices have published recommendations for which [groups should be vaccinated first](#). Supplies will increase over time. The goal is for everyone to be able to easily get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as large quantities are available.

## How will distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine work?

The federal government oversees a centralized system to order, distribute, and track COVID-19 vaccines. All vaccines will be ordered through CDC. Vaccine providers will receive vaccines from CDC's centralized distributor or directly from a vaccine manufacturer.

[Two vaccines are authorized and recommended](#) to prevent COVID-19 in the United States, other COVID-19 vaccine candidates are in development, and clinical trials are being conducted at the same time as large-scale manufacturing. With first doses now available, planning and preparing for a COVID-19 vaccination program is very important.

## Will there be enough vaccine for everyone?

Currently, two vaccines are authorized and recommended to prevent COVID-19 in the United States. To help guide decisions about how to distribute limited initial supplies of COVID-19 vaccine, CDC and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices have published recommendations for which [groups should be vaccinated first](#). It is understandable how concerning this may be for people, especially for [those who are at increased risk for serious illness](#) from this virus and for their loved ones.

The goal is for everyone to be able to easily get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as large quantities are available. That is why, early in the response, the [federal government began investing in select vaccine manufacturers](#) to help them increase their ability to quickly make and distribute a large amount of COVID-19 vaccine. This will allow the United States to start with as much vaccine as possible and continually increase the supply in the weeks and months to follow. The goal is for everyone to be able to easily get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as large quantities are available. Several thousand vaccination providers will be available, including doctors' offices, retail pharmacies, hospitals, and federally qualified health centers.

## What can I do now to protect myself until the vaccine is available to me?

You should cover your mouth and nose with a mask when around others, avoid close contact with people who are sick, stay 6 feet away from others, avoid crowds, and wash your hands often. Get more information about these and other steps you can take to [protect yourself and others from COVID-19](#).

## What vaccine options are available to me?

Currently, [two vaccines](#) are authorized and recommended to prevent COVID-19:

- [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#)
- [Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine](#)

Multiple COVID-19 vaccines are also still under development. Large-scale (Phase 3) clinical trials are in progress or being planned for two additional COVID-19 vaccines in the United States.

In most cases, you will receive the vaccine in use at the clinic you attend and won't be able to choose at this time.

## How were we able to develop this vaccine so quickly?

[Severe acute respiratory syndrome \(SARS\)](#) and [Middle East respiratory syndrome \(MERS\)](#) are two diseases caused by coronaviruses that are closely related to the virus that causes COVID-19. Researchers began working on developing vaccines for these diseases after they were discovered in 2003 and 2012, respectively. None of the SARS vaccines ever made it past the first stages of development and testing, in large part due to lack of interest because the virus disappeared. One MERS vaccine (MVA-MERS-S) successfully completed a phase 1 clinical trial in 2019. Lessons learned from this earlier vaccine research have been used to inform strategies for developing a COVID-19 vaccine.

## Why has it taken so long to develop a COVID-19 vaccine?

When a new flu strain is identified, like H1N1 in 2009, vaccine manufacturers can use the same processes that are used to make the annual seasonal flu vaccine, saving valuable time. Unlike flu, coronaviruses do not yet have licensed vaccines or processes to build on. In addition, the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is a new virus, so entirely new vaccines must be developed and tested to ensure they work and are safe. There are many steps in the [vaccine testing and approval process](#). [Multiple agencies and groups in the United States](#) are working together to make sure that a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine is available as quickly as possible.

## How many shots of the COVID-19 vaccine will I need?

The two authorized and recommended vaccines to prevent COVID-19 in the United States both need two shots to be effective. There is one COVID-19 vaccine in Phase 3 clinical trials in the United States that uses one shot.

## Do I need to wear a mask while getting my vaccination?

Yes. CDC recommends that during the pandemic people [wear a mask](#) that covers their nose and mouth when in contact with others outside your household, when in healthcare facilities, and when receiving any vaccine, including a COVID-19 vaccine. Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unable to remove a mask without assistance should not wear a mask. For more information, visit [considerations for wearing masks](#).

## I heard the vaccine is free for all. Who is paying?

Vaccine doses purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars will be given to the American people at no cost. However, vaccination providers will be able to charge an administration fee for giving the shot to someone. Vaccine providers can get this fee reimbursed by the patient's public or private insurance company or, for uninsured patients, by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund.

## Are there special considerations on who should receive the vaccination first?

CDC is making recommendations for [who should be offered COVID-19 vaccine first](#) when supplies are limited. To help guide decisions about how to distribute limited initial supplies of COVID-19 vaccine, CDC and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices have [published](#)

[recommendations](#) for which groups should be vaccinated first. The goal is for everyone to be able to easily get a COVID-19 vaccination as soon as large quantities of vaccine are available.

While CDC makes recommendations for who should be offered COVID-19 vaccine first, each state has its own plan for vaccine prioritization, distribution and allocation. Please contact your state health department for more information on their planning for COVID-19 vaccines.

Learn how [CDC is making COVID-19 vaccine recommendations](#), including recommendations if there is a limited supply, based on input from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).

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

COVID-19 vaccination should be offered to you regardless of whether you already had COVID-19 infection. You should not be required to have an antibody test before you are vaccinated.

However, anyone currently infected with COVID-19 should wait to get vaccinated until after their illness has resolved and after they have met the [criteria](#) to discontinue isolation.

Additionally, current evidence suggests that reinfection with the virus that causes COVID-19 is uncommon in the 90 days after initial infection. Therefore, people with a recent infection may delay vaccination until the end of that 90-day period if desired.

## Why do we need a vaccine? Don't masks and social distancing work?

Stopping a pandemic requires using all the tools available. Vaccines work with your immune system so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. Other steps, like covering your mouth and nose with a mask and staying at least 6 feet away from others, help reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus or spreading it to others. Together, COVID-19 vaccination and following CDC's recommendations [to protect yourself and others](#) will offer the best protection from COVID-19.

## Do I need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others if I have received two doses of the vaccine?

Yes. While experts learn more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide under real-life conditions, it will be important for everyone to continue using **all the tools** available to us to help stop this pandemic, like covering your mouth and nose with a mask, washing hands often, and staying at least 6 feet away from others. Together, COVID-19 vaccination and following CDC's recommendations for [how to protect yourself and others](#) will offer the best protection from getting and spreading COVID-19. Experts need to understand more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide before deciding to change recommendations on steps everyone should take to

slow the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. Other factors, including how many people get vaccinated and how the virus is spreading in communities, will also affect this decision.

## When can I stop wearing a mask and social distancing?

There is not enough information currently available to say if or when CDC will stop recommending that people [wear masks](#) and [avoid close contact with others](#) to help prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. Experts need to understand more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide before making that decision. Other factors, including how many people get vaccinated and how the virus is spreading in communities, will also affect this decision.

## Are there other vaccines that can help prevent COVID-19?

There are currently no available vaccines that will prevent COVID-19. However, [multiple agencies and groups in the United States](#) are working together to make sure that a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine is available as quickly as possible.

A flu vaccine will not protect you from getting COVID-19, but it can prevent you from getting influenza (flu) at the same time as COVID-19. This can keep you from having a more severe illness. While it's not possible to say with certainty what will happen in the winter, CDC believes it's likely that flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 will both be spreading during that time. That means that getting a flu vaccine is more important than ever.

## Does immunity after recovering from COVID-19 last longer than protection from COVID-19 vaccines?

The protection someone gains from having an infection (called natural immunity) varies depending on the disease, and it varies from person to person. Since this virus is new, we don't know how long natural immunity might last. Current evidence suggests that reinfection with the virus that causes COVID-19 is uncommon in the 90 days after initial infection.

Regarding vaccination, we won't know how long immunity lasts until we have a vaccine and more data on how well it works.

Both natural immunity and vaccine-induced immunity are important aspects of COVID-19 that experts are trying to learn more about, and CDC will keep the public informed as new evidence becomes available.

## What percentage of the population needs to get vaccinated to have herd immunity to COVID-19?

Experts do not know what percentage of people would need to get vaccinated to achieve herd immunity to COVID-19. Herd immunity is a term used to describe when enough people have protection—either from previous infection or vaccination—that it is unlikely a virus or bacteria can spread and cause disease. As a result, everyone within the community is protected even if some people don't have any protection themselves. The percentage of people who need to have protection in order to achieve herd immunity varies by disease.

## I heard the COVID-19 vaccine has not been approved. Is this true?

During a public health emergency, the FDA can issue an Emergency Use Authorization, which allows the use of unapproved medical products or unapproved uses of approved medical products to diagnose, treat, or prevent serious or life-threatening diseases when certain criteria are met (see below).