

# COVID-19 VACCINE

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why should I get a COVID-19 vaccine?**

Getting the vaccine will lower your chances of getting COVID-19 or experiencing severe illness and help protect yourself, your family and your community. You can spread COVID-19 without feeling sick. It will also help stop the pandemic. The more people who get vaccinated, the less opportunity COVID-19 has to spread.

### **How do I know the vaccine is safe?**

The U.S. vaccine safety system ensures that all vaccines, including the recently COVID-19 vaccines authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), are as safe as possible.

### **How does the vaccine work?**

The current vaccines available (Pfizer and Moderna) are called messenger RNA vaccines (mRNA). These vaccines allow cells to make a spike protein that looks the same as protein found on the surface of the COVID-19 virus. The protein on its own is not harmful to our bodies, but your immune system will recognize that it's something that doesn't belong and make antibodies that will help fight off a future infection.

### **Can the vaccine change my DNA?**

No, the material from the COVID-19 vaccine (mRNA) never enters the part of your cell that contains DNA (the nucleus) so it never interacts with your DNA. After the mRNA is used to make the protein, it degrades.

### **I'm concerned with how fast the vaccine was developed. Should I wait to be vaccinated?**

The effort to develop a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine was a global effort fueled by a private-public partnership and made possible by a large, diverse pool of adult volunteers. No phases of study were skipped in getting FDA authorization, and the technology within the vaccine has been studied for decades.

### **Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccine? Will it cause me to test positive for COVID-19?**

No, the vaccine cannot cause an infection, and you will not test positive for COVID-19 with the current vaccines available. There is a possibility that you may test positive on antibody tests after receiving the vaccine series, but this is still being studied.

### **What are the vaccine side effects?**

It is common to have pain, redness or swelling on the arm you receive the shot in (similar to other vaccines like the flu shot). Some people have no additional side effects, while others may feel tired, get a headache or experience short-term fever and/or chills. Side effects generally resolve in 1-3 days.

### **I heard there have been some serious allergic reactions, should I be concerned?**

Like all vaccines or medicines, there is a chance of allergic reaction, but the overall risk is low. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises that you should not get the vaccine if you have had a previous allergic reaction to an initial dose of the COVID-19 vaccine or its components.

### **I am pregnant or breastfeeding. Can I get the vaccine?**

You should make a decision based on the benefits and risks with your health care provider. Pregnant and breastfeeding patients were not included in the trials, although there were pregnancies that occurred within both trials (with no negative effects seen in patients in the vaccine groups). It is known that pregnant women are at a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 infection.

### **If I get the vaccine can I stop wearing a mask and social distancing?**

No, not right away. Although you personally will have good protection from getting sick, there is still a small risk of infection. It is also not known yet how well the vaccine will prevent COVID-19 from passing to others as it is still being studied.

### **I already had COVID-19. Should I get the vaccine when it is available to me?**

Yes, those who have already had COVID-19 can be vaccinated. It is unknown how long people are protected after COVID-19. You should wait until you recover from your illness and no longer need to be in isolation.