

# COVID-19 Vaccine Safety Information with Infectious Disease Director Kris Ehresmann: Transcript

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[onscreen text and Stay Safe MN logo] COVID-19 Vaccine Safety Information with Infectious Disease Director Kris Ehresmann

Hi, my name is Kris Ehresmann and I'm the director for infectious disease at the Minnesota Department of Health.

[onscreen text] Kris Ehresmann, MPH, RN, MDH Director of Infectious Disease

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on all of us. Since the beginning, we have known that a key way we were going to be able to stop the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 was through vaccination. The virus that causes COVID-19 is new, so it required some new vaccines to fight it. We know people may have questions about these new vaccines and how they were made. Today, I want to talk to you about a few key things.

[onscreen text] How the COVID-19 vaccines were made

It's important to know that NO safety steps were skipped while the vaccines were being developed. They were able to be developed quickly because some steps happened at the same time and because we were able to use existing research to get things started. The federal government put a lot of money towards COVID-19 vaccine development. And that funding allowed medical researchers to focus on developing the vaccines at the same time large amounts of the vaccine were being produced. That way, the vaccines that were shown to be safe and effective could be used as soon as they were approved.

The COVID-19 vaccines are carefully studied before being authorized for emergency use. The vaccines went through several studies called clinical trials. This is the same process used for studying other vaccines. Volunteers for the clinical trials come from a wide variety of backgrounds. This includes people of different ages, races, ethnicities, and medical histories.

A team of medical researchers look at study results and how people felt after they got the vaccine. If the data clearly shows the vaccine works and is safe, it gets emergency use authorization.

Health officials continue to monitor the COVID-19 vaccines for safety once they are being used in the general population. This allows them to identify if there are any uncommon side effects that are so rare they were not found during clinical trials. Experts review any safety concerns right away and give information to providers and the public on how to treat and respond to them. The pause to review the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is an example of this process in action. Vaccine safety is a top priority at every step of the process.

[onscreen text] Vaccine side effects

Side effects after getting a vaccine are normal. Side effects, such as pain where the shot was given, fever, chills, fatigue, and headache are very often mild and only last a day or two. Side effects can

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happen as your body's immune system is building up protection. And it's also completely OK if a person does not have any noticeable side effects. Each person responds differently to the vaccines. The vaccine cannot give you COVID-19 disease.

[onscreen text] Which vaccine you should get

There are several COVID-19 vaccines available. Each of them has gone through the studies and safety checks that I mentioned and all of them have been found to be effective at protecting people from COVID-19 disease. All of the vaccines are especially good at preventing severe disease, meaning they can keep people out of the hospital and prevent deaths.

You may have heard that each vaccine has a different level of effectiveness, but it does not mean one is better than the other. Because each of the vaccines were developed and studied during different times, and in different situations, we can't directly compare them to each other. What we know from the vaccine studies is all of the vaccines help prevent COVID-19.

We encourage you to get the first vaccine that is offered to you. There are no recommendations for people to get one vaccine over another. However, people, especially women younger than 50 years of age, should be aware of the rare but increased risk of blood clotting with the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Talk to your health care provider if you have questions—they can share information on the risks and benefits of this vaccine. And there are other COVID-19 vaccine options available for which this risk has not been identified.

Of course, it's always your choice to get vaccinated and you should feel comfortable with the vaccine that you receive. I hope this information helps provide some background on COVID-19 vaccines. We're every fortunate to have several safe and effective vaccines that will help us end this pandemic.

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[onscreen text and Stay Safe MN logo] For the latest information about available COVID-19 vaccines, visit: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/>

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