Getting Vaccinated for COVID-19

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There are several COVID-19 vaccines available in the United States to help stop the spread of COVID-19 disease. The Pfizer vaccine is available for people age 6 months and older. The Moderna vaccine is available for children 6 months and older. The Novavax vaccine is available for people age 18 years and older. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is available for people age 18 years and older in limited situations. It is your decision whether to get the vaccine.

Before getting your vaccine

General information

▪ How it’s made: The COVID-19 vaccines use various technologies to tell the body how to recognize the virus that causes COVID-19 and defend itself against it. The vaccines do not contain live virus. You cannot get COVID-19 from any of the vaccines.

▪ Doses: For the Pfizer, Moderna, or Novavax vaccines, you will initially need two doses of vaccine; however, children age 6 months through 4 years who get the Pfizer vaccine will need three doses. This is called the primary vaccine series. Primary series doses must be from the same product. You will only need one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine for the primary series. When you get your vaccine, you will be told if you need to come back for another dose and when.

▪ Additional dose: People who have certain conditions that weaken their immune system may be recommended to get an additional dose of Moderna or Pfizer vaccine as part of their primary vaccine series. Talk to your health care provider to find out more.

▪ Booster dose: Everyone 5 years and older should get a booster shot, if eligible. The timing of your booster shot depends on the vaccine you received for your primary series: If you got Pfizer vaccine (age 5 years and older) or Moderna (age 18 years and older), you should get your booster shot five months after the final dose in your primary series. If you received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, you should get a booster at least two months after the first dose. At this time, people who get the Novavax vaccine and children under 18 who get the Moderna vaccine for their primary vaccine series are not recommended to get a booster shot, but one may be recommended in the future.
• CDC recommends that certain people get a second booster dose. They are people age 50 and older and people age 12 and older who have certain conditions that weaken their immune system, and people who received Johnson & Johnson vaccine for their initial dose and booster dose.

• People age 18 and older do not have to get the same vaccine for your booster dose(s) that you received for your primary series. People 5-17 years of age who got the Pfizer vaccine can only receive the Pfizer vaccine for their booster.

• Talk to your health care provider about whether you should get a booster dose and when to get it.

  ▪ Children 6 months through 11 years: The vaccines for young children are a smaller dose of the vaccine than for older children and adults. The dose is based on the child’s age the day they get vaccinated, not their size or weight. Get more information at COVID-19 Vaccine for Children and Teens (mn.gov/vaxforkids).

  ▪ What to bring: You do not need proof of health insurance or legal identification to get vaccinated. If you have this information, bring it to your vaccination appointment. If you are getting a second dose, additional dose for people with certain immunocompromising conditions, or booster dose, bring your vaccination card if you have it. Wear a mask.

  ▪ Timeline: Getting all recommended doses is very important. It is OK if the timing between the doses is not exact. If you miss the exact timing between doses, just try to get your next dose as soon as you can.

Getting your vaccine

What to expect

• COVID-19 status: If you are sick with COVID-19, or think you might have COVID-19, wait until you are better and no longer need to isolate before you get your COVID-19 vaccination.

• Education: Before you get vaccinated you should receive a fact sheet. If you have any questions about the vaccine, ask any of the staff at the clinic.

• Agreement: Some clinics may ask you to sign your name on a form that says that you received the fact sheet, and you agree to receive the vaccine.

• Vaccine card: You should get a card that shows the date you got your first vaccination. An appointment date can be written on the card if you need to come back for another dose.

  ▪ Keep the card in your wallet or purse and bring it with you if you need to come back for another dose. If you have a cell phone, you can take a picture of the card in case you misplace it.

• Screening: You will be asked a few health questions to make sure it is okay for you to receive the vaccine. Questions may be about allergies to any vaccine ingredients, how you are feeling that day, etc.

• Safety: Vaccination clinics may require you to wear a mask.

Cost

The vaccine will be free to everyone, regardless of your immigration or insurance status. Some vaccination clinics may ask for medical insurance information so they can get reimbursed from the insurance company. You should not receive a bill. If you do not have insurance, you can still get vaccinated.
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After getting your vaccine

Common side effects

People may have side effects from the vaccine. Sometimes these side effects may stop you from doing your normal activities for a couple days.

Common side effects happen within a day or two after vaccination and can include:

- Pain where you received the vaccine
- Feeling tired
- Headache
- Achy muscles and joints
- Chills
- Fever
- Swelling under your arm pits

Ask your doctor about taking over-the-counter medicines for any pain or fever. These side effects should go away within one to two days. If you develop something of concern, call your doctor. If your arm hurts where you got the shot, place a clean, cool, wet washcloth over the area. Using your arm or exercising it also helps. Drink plenty of fluids if you have a fever.

Your doctor will tell you about v-safe, a smartphone app. It helps you track and report any side effects that you might have and remind you when it is time to get your second dose. Find more information at V-safe After Vaccination Health Checker (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/vsafe.html).

Serious side effects

A small number of people may have a serious allergic reaction to a COVID-19 vaccine. If this happens, it usually happens 15 to 30 minutes after getting the vaccination. Serious side effects are rare, but you will be asked to wait for 15 to 30 minutes after getting the vaccination to make sure you feel OK. If you have a severe allergic reaction after you leave the vaccination clinic, call 911, or go to the nearest hospital.

Signs of a severe reaction include:

- Trouble breathing
- Swelling of your face and throat
- Fast heartbeat
- Bad rash all over your body
- Feeling dizzy and weak

Myocarditis and pericarditis

Rare cases of myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) and pericarditis (inflammation of the lining outside the heart) have occurred after getting the Pfizer, Moderna, or Novavax COVID-19 vaccines. In most cases, symptoms began a few days after the second dose of COVID-19 vaccine and went away quickly. Most cases of myocarditis and pericarditis have been in male ages 12–39 years. The risk is very low. Seek medical attention right away if you have any of the following symptoms after receiving COVID-19 vaccine:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Feelings of having a fast-beating, fluttering, or pounding heart
Blood clotting issues

There is a risk of a rare but serious condition involving blood clots and low platelets in people after receiving the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine. **This risk is very low.** Most people who developed this blood clotting issue were adult women younger than 50 years old. For women 50 years and older and men of all ages, this adverse event is even more rare. This condition is treatable, but the Pfizer, Moderna and Novavax vaccines are preferred over the Johnson & Johnson vaccine in most cases. If you would still like to receive the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, talk to your health care provider about the risks.

Guillain-Barré syndrome

Guillain Barré syndrome (GBS) (rare disorder where the body’s immune system damages nerve cells, causing muscle weakness and sometimes paralysis) has occurred in some people who have received the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine. In most of these people, symptoms began within 42 days after getting vaccinated. **The risk is very low.** Seek medical attention right away if you have any of the following symptoms after receiving the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine:

- Weakness or tingling sensations, especially in the legs or arms, that’s worsening and spreading to other parts of the body
- Hard time walking
- Hard time with moving your face, including speaking, chewing, or swallowing
- Double vision or not being able to move eyes
- Difficulty with bladder control or bowel function

Keep you and your loved ones safe

Staying up to date on your COVID-19 vaccine, including boosters when eligible, is one of the best ways to protect yourself and your family. Even after you have been vaccinated, it is important to continue to follow current public health guidance to reduce the spread of COVID-19. When recommended:

- Wear a mask.
- Wash your hands.
- Stay home if you feel sick.