



Preparing for a COVID-19 Vaccine

Knowledge builds confidence. As a health care professional, you were placed first in line to receive a COVID-19 vaccine because of your essential role in fighting this deadly pandemic, as well as your increased risk of getting COVID-19 and spreading it to your patients. Your decision to get vaccinated can protect more than just your health. It can also help protect your colleagues, patients, families, and communities.

It's important that you have the information and tools to prepare you for combating this virus and slowing the spread. One of these tools is a COVID-19 vaccine.

This fact sheet will prepare you for what to expect before and after getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

Before the appointment

What to expect

When you get the vaccine, you should still wear a mask and maintain social distancing. You should receive a vaccination card or printout that tells you what COVID-19 vaccine you received, the date you received it, and where you received it.

You should receive a paper or electronic version of a fact sheet that tells you more about the specific COVID-19 vaccine you are being offered. The fact sheet contains information to help you understand the risks and benefits of receiving that specific vaccine.

You should be monitored on-site for at least 15 minutes for adverse reactions.

Different vaccines

Multiple COVID-19 vaccines are available.

- Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine requires 1 initial dose.
- Pfizer-BioNTech's vaccine requires 2 initial doses, 21 days apart.
- Moderna's vaccine requires 2 initial doses, 28 days apart.

If you're age 18 or older, you can choose which COVID-19 vaccine to get; CDC has [issued a preference](#) for people to get an mRNA vaccine (Pfizer BioNTech and Moderna).

If you meet the criteria for having a [compromised immune system](#), you should get a third dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine at least 4 weeks after your second dose.

All vaccinated people 12 and older should get a booster shot as soon as you're eligible to keep up your protection against COVID-19. See the [latest guidance on boosters](#).

Cost

There is no cost to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

After the appointment

Potential side effects

Vaccines work with your body's natural defenses so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. As a result, you may experience some side effects after getting the vaccine. These reactions mean the vaccine is working to help teach your body how to fight COVID-19 if you are exposed.

Possible side effects include soreness or swelling at the site of the injection, fever, chills, fatigue, and headache, but they should go away in a few days. There have been no trends of serious or long-term side effects. It's important to remember that having these types of side effects does NOT mean that you have COVID-19. It's very unlikely that a severe reaction will happen, but if it does, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

Scheduling the second dose

If you need help scheduling your vaccine appointment for your second shot, contact the location that set up your appointment for assistance. For questions or if you are having trouble using vaccine scheduling systems, reach out to the organization that enrolled you in the system. This may be your state or local health department, employer, or vaccine provider.

Once you're fully vaccinated

[If you're fully vaccinated](#) (2 weeks after your final dose), you can participate in many of the activities that you did before the pandemic. To maximize protection from highly contagious variants and prevent possibly spreading COVID to others, wear a mask inside public places if you're in an area of substantial or high spread of COVID-19.

If you're not yet vaccinated, you should continue to:

- Wear a mask when inside public places.

- Keep at least 6 feet part from people who don't live with you and who may not be vaccinated.
- Avoid crowds.
- Avoid poorly ventilated spaces.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.

Vaccinated and unvaccinated people must still follow federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial laws, rules, and regulations. That includes public transportation, airport/airplane, local business, and workplace guidance.

People with compromised immune systems need extra doses of a COVID-19 vaccine

People with compromised immune systems are less able to fight infections. If any of the following apply to you, you may not be fully protected from COVID-19 even if you've received two doses of Pfizer-BioNTech's or Moderna's mRNA COVID-19 vaccine:

- You have a moderate or severe [primary immunodeficiency disorder](#), such as DiGeorge syndrome or Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome.
- You have an advanced or untreated HIV infection.
- You've ever had an organ transplant or had a stem cell transplant within the last 2 years.
- You're being treated with corticosteroids or other immunosuppressant medicines for such conditions as arthritis, asthma, or an autoimmune disease, such as lupus, sarcoidosis, inflammatory bowel disease, rheumatoid arthritis, and psoriasis.
- You're being treated for cancer.

To get the most benefit from the mRNA COVID-19 vaccines, [people with compromised immune systems](#) should get a third dose. Wait at least 4 weeks after you get your second dose to get your third dose.

You should also continue to follow current COVID-19 prevention measures until your health care provider says it's safe for you to stop:

- Wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth around people you don't live with and when inside public places.
- Stay at least 6 feet apart from people you don't live with.
- Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces.

- wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol when soap and water aren't available.

What if I have more questions?

If you have more questions about getting the vaccine, please visit the CDC [website](#).

SAFETY IS THE TOP PRIORITY

The FDA and CDC have the highest standards when it comes to ensuring the safety and effectiveness of vaccines. Their process includes the following procedures:

- Scientists must first test vaccines extensively in medical studies to ensure they are safe and effective.
- Before the FDA authorizes a vaccine for use among the public, it ensures its safety by independently:
 - Reviewing the data from the medical studies, and
 - Inspecting the manufacturing facilities.
- Even after a vaccine has been authorized, the FDA and CDC closely monitor vaccine administration to identify even rare side effects or reactions.
- The FDA and CDC closely review any reports of side effects or reactions and share these facts with the public.

The extremely rare cases of blood clotting and Guillain-Barré Syndrome following Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine and heart inflammation following Pfizer-BioNTech's and Moderna's vaccines — a very small number of cases out of millions of vaccinations — show that the FDA and CDC's vaccine safety monitoring systems work and catch even the rarest reactions.

Thorough investigations have confirmed that all three available vaccines are safe and effective. However, CDC [prefers](#) most people get the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine.

The monitoring systems ensure that doctors are notified to watch for signs of serious reactions, no matter how rare, and are aware of proper courses of treatment.





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