COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ

Which vaccines are available?

Currently, two vaccines are authorized and recommended to prevent COVID-19:

- Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine
- Moderna COVID-19 vaccine

The vaccines work by instructing your body to make a harmless piece of "spike protein" that is found on the surface COVID-19 virus. Your body builds an immune response against this protein and stores that response in the memory cells to use it against COVID-19 virus when or if exposed/infected.

How many doses do I need?

The two authorized and recommended vaccines in the US to prevent COVID-19 require two doses to be effective.

- Two doses for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, 21 days apart.
- Two doses for the Moderna vaccine, 28 days apart.

If you can't get your second dose at the recommended interval then it will still be as effective, you just delay getting to the 94/95% efficacy and should get it as soon as it is available after 21 or 28 days.

Is one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine effective?

Getting the second dose of the vaccine will make it more effective. When you receive your first dose, you should schedule the second dose appointment before leaving your doctor's office.

Can you be infected with COVID-19 in between doses?

Yes, one can get the disease between the two doses. Efficacy of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines in preventing the symptomatic disease were noted to be only 52% and 80.2%, respectively, after the first dose.

Will I have a choice about which brand of COVID-19 vaccine I get?

Due to limited supply and equal efficacy of two vaccines, the vaccine you receive will depend on what is available at that time. Both vaccines are safe and effective.

How long will it take for the vaccine to protect me from COVID-19?

After you get both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, it takes your body about 7 days for the Pfizer vaccine and 14 days for the Moderna vaccine to build an appropriate immune response.

Are there any side effects?

The most commonly reported side effects, which typically lasted 1-3 days, were pain at the injection site, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, and fever.

Can a COVID-19 vaccine make me sick with COVID-19?

No. The COVID-19 vaccines do not contain a "live" virus and cannot give you COVID-19.
If you feel ill after getting vaccinated, that is because the vaccine is creating your body's immune response against the virus that it will use in case you get infected with COVID-19 in the future.

After getting a COVID-19 vaccine, will I test positive for COVID-19 on a viral test?

No. A vaccine will not cause you to test positive on viral tests.

COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ cont.

How effective are the COVID-19 vaccines?

The first two vaccines available have shown 94-95% efficacy against a person becoming ill with COVID-19 and being symptomatic. Data is not clear in regard to asymptomatic carries of COVID-19.

How much will the vaccine cost?

COVID-19 vaccines, including their administration, are free.

Is the vaccine safe for children?

Currently, COVID-19 vaccines are not recommended for children:

- Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is for ages sixteen and above
- Moderna vaccine is for ages eighteen and above.

Clinical trials are currently ongoing to identify if these vaccines are safe in children less than 16 years of age.

Can pregnant or breastfeeding women be vaccinated against COVID-19?

Yes. Pregnant women have a higher risk for complications from COVID-19 disease. There are no study results available yet on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in pregnant women. However, experts believe that the vaccines are unlikely to pose a risk to the woman or the fetus. There were women in the trials that became pregnant soon after getting the vaccine and as of now no adverse effects have been reported in those patients. Pregnant women can talk with a doctor about their risk of COVID-19 disease and how they might benefit from vaccination.

If I have already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, as of now we know that there is short term immunity after one gets COVID but people can get re-infected and the hope is that vaccine provides a longer immunity than the disease itself and prevents people from getting COVID again.

Will a COVID-19 vaccine alter my DNA?

No. COVID-19 mRNA vaccines do not change or interact with your DNA in any way. The mRNA from a COVID-19 vaccine never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA is kept. This means the mRNA cannot affect or interact with our DNA in any way. Instead, COVID-19 mRNA vaccines work with the body's natural defenses to safely develop immunity to the disease.

Will the COVID-19 vaccine be a mandatory requirement?

No, there is no mandatory vaccination requirement from either the state or federal government.

Will I still need to wear a mask after getting a COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, Vaccines are not 100% effective and the data is unclear in regard to duration of immunity, hence it is important that we continue to follow the social distancing, masking and handwashing guidelines until majority of the people are vaccinated and we have more data in regard to the immunity from the vaccines.