

COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Has the vaccine been officially approved for use?

A. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have been approved for Emergency Use Authorization by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), a mechanism used to facilitate the availability and use of medical countermeasures, including vaccines, during public health emergencies such as the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Q: What is an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA)?

A: According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), an Emergency Use Authorization is a mechanism used by the FDA to facilitate the availability and use of medical countermeasures, including vaccines, during public health emergencies such as the current COVID-19 pandemic. For an EUA to be issued for a vaccine, there must be adequate manufacturing information to ensure quality, safety, and consistency (e.g. clinical trials) and the FDA must determine that the known and potential benefits outweigh the known and potential risks of the vaccine.

Q: Is the vaccine safe for distribution?

A: Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have been approved for Emergency Use Authorization by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Further, studies have shown that there is a low risk of complications. According to the FDA, a small percentage of the trial participants experienced fatigue and/or headaches, similar to the mild complications associated with the flu vaccine. If you have had a serious reaction to a vaccine in the past, we recommend you discuss your concerns and medical history with your provider or specialist before accessing the vaccination portal to request the vaccine.

Q: How effective is the vaccine?

A: Both Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have proven to be approximately 95% effective against COVID-19 after the second dose. Efficacy was consistent across age, gender, race and ethnicity demographics; observed efficacy in adults 65 years of age and older was over 94%.

Q: Are two shots required or will receiving one shot also be effective?

A: Receiving one shot is not sufficient. It is necessary to receive both shots from the same manufacturer to be effective.

Q: When can I get my vaccine?

A: We are closely following the vaccine approach as directed by the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and local Departments of Health. We are not vaccinating patients at this time but will keep you informed of when the vaccine is available.

Q: How is the vaccine administered?

A: The vaccine is administered in the form of an injection, like a flu shot. With both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, two injections are required and administered approximately three to four weeks apart.

Q: Is the injection and/or vaccine painful to receive?

A: Like a flu vaccination, there can be minor soreness at the injection site.

Q: Are there any contraindications?

A: We recommend that you consult your personal physician if you have any questions regarding your personal health situation. Specifically, you may want to speak to your personal physician if any of the following conditions apply to you:

- a. History of severe allergy to a vaccine or injectable medication
- b. Pregnancy or planning to be pregnant in the next 2 months
- c. Breastfeeding
- d. Presently taking any blood thinners or have a clotting or platelet disorder
- e. Immune system disorder or actively taking immune suppressive therapy
- f. Presently enrolled in a COVID treatment or prevention study
- g. If you have had a COVID infection and been treated with monoclonal antibodies within the last 90 days

Q: Are there any side effects to the COVID-19 vaccine?

A: Studies have shown that there is a low risk of complications. Potential side effects are similar to the flu vaccine with a small percentage of trial participants experiencing fatigue and/or headaches.

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

A: You should still receive the vaccine. Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that re-infection with COVID-19 is possible, the CDC recommends that you get the vaccine even if you already had a COVID-19 infection.

At this time, experts do not know how long someone is protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. The immunity someone gains from having an infection, called natural immunity, varies from person to person. Some early evidence suggests natural immunity may not last very long. The vaccine is more effective, and studies have shown that it protects you longer than having had a COVID-19 infection.

Q: Is there any danger to getting the vaccine if I am positive but asymptomatic? Should I be getting tested for antibodies?

A: According to the CDC, there is no current indication that an asymptomatic carrier is at risk for an adverse reaction if an asymptomatic carrier receives the vaccine.

Q: How does the vaccine for COVID-19 work?

A: There are many articles explaining how the COVID-19 vaccine works. For the most accurate information, please visit the CDC's website, specifically <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/mrna.html>.

Q: How long will it take for the vaccine to begin protecting me?

A: It normally takes about two to three weeks for cellular immunity to develop and several days for a full antibody response after the second dose.

Q: Will I be able to choose which of the two available vaccines I wish to receive?

A: No, we are not able to accommodate individual requests as to which vaccine is administered. The CDC and FDA information shows the two vaccines have similar efficacy and safety profiles.

Q: What is V-Safe?

A: V-Safe is a new smartphone-based, after vaccination health checker for people who receive COVID-19 vaccines. V-Safe will use text messaging and web surveys from CDC to check in with vaccine recipients for health problems following COVID-19 vaccination. The system will also provide telephone follow up to anyone who reports significant adverse events.

Q: Will the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines be effective against the new strains being encountered in the United Kingdom and Europe?

A: Both the CDC and Pfizer indicate that the vaccine will be effective against new strains of the COVID-19 virus.

Q: Why would a vaccine be needed if we can do other things, like social distancing and wearing masks, to prevent the virus that caused COVID-19 from spreading?

A: Stopping a pandemic requires using all the tools available. Vaccines work with your immune system so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. Other steps, like covering your mouth and nose with a mask and staying at least 6 feet away from others, help reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus or spreading it to others. Together, COVID-19 vaccination and following the CDC's recommendations to protect yourself and others will offer the best protection from COVID-19.

Q: Do I need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others if I have received 2 doses of the vaccine?

A: Yes. Receiving the COVID vaccine is strongly encouraged by the CDC. In order to end this pandemic, we must also use all the tools at our disposal including wearing a mask when in public, maintaining social distancing, and frequently washing hands and/or using hand sanitizer.

Q: When can I stop wearing a mask and avoiding close contact with others after I have received the COVID-19 vaccine?

A: There is not enough information currently available to determine if or when CDC will stop recommending that people wear masks and avoid close contact with others to help prevent the spread of the virus.