

COVID-19 VACCINATION: FAQs

1. What is the COVID-19 vaccine?

- a. There are two COVID-19 vaccines authorized for use by the FDA. The Pfizer vaccine is given in two shots, 21 days apart, and is authorized for use in people 16 years of age and older. The Moderna vaccine is given in two shots, 28 days apart, and is authorized for use in people 18 and older.

2. How effective is the COVID-19 vaccine?

- a. According to the FDA and CDC (2020), The [Pfizer](#) (95%) and the [Moderna](#) (94.1%) vaccines are both highly effective (~95%) at preventing illness for COVID-19 after both doses are received.

3. How does the COVID-19 vaccine work?

- a. SARS-CoV-2 is the virus that causes COVID-19. The vaccines increase the body's immune response by making antibodies. These antibodies block the SARS-CoV-2 virus from injecting itself into human cells, thereby preventing it from reproducing and making you sick.

4. Do the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines contain live viruses?

- a. **No.** The Pfizer and Moderna vaccine do not have live virus in it. You cannot become infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 from the vaccine.

5. Is the vaccine safe?

- a. Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have undergone rigorous review (over 60,000 people were included in these trials), after which the FDA authorized them for emergency use. The COVID-19 clinical trials included people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. The vaccine was found to be effective and safe for all participants. Participants in the original clinical trials will continue to be followed for two years. Experts believe getting the approved shots, along with wearing a face covering, maintaining physical distancing, and avoiding crowds (especially inside buildings) is the best way to protect yourself, your family, your friends and others in the community.

6. What are potential side effects to receiving the COVID-19 vaccine?

- a. Both the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccines work by helping your body produce antibodies. Antibodies are proteins that help fight infections from viruses, bacteria and other germs. As your body develops an immune response you can develop some symptoms.

In ongoing clinical trials, the most common side effects included:

- Pain at the injection site
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Chills
- Joint pain
- Mild fever

Side effects are generally mild and go away after a day or two. They are likely to be more pronounced after the second shot.

As with any vaccine, there is a low chance of allergic reaction. If you have a history of *severe allergic reaction* to other vaccines, please talk to your physician about whether you should receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

7. How is the vaccine administered?

- a. The Pfizer vaccine is given in two shots, three weeks apart. The Moderna vaccine is given in two shots, four weeks apart. Both vaccines are given as an injection into the muscle. You must receive the same vaccine for both doses.

8. How long will I have immunity for after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine?

- a. We do not know yet. Clinical studies have so far followed patients for only a few months after vaccination. Patients in the studies will eventually be followed for two years. After that, we should know more about how long immunity lasts. It is possible you will need a booster shot in the future.

9. Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

- a. For most people, the answer is yes. The vaccine is currently authorized for use in people 16 years of age and older for Pfizer and 18 and older for Moderna. You should not get the vaccine if you have had a *severe* allergic reaction to any ingredient in the vaccine, or if you had a *severe* allergic reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine.

10. If I have already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to be vaccinated?

- a. **Yes.** There is not enough information currently available to say if or for how long after infection someone is protected from getting COVID-19 again. If you have had COVID-19 in the past three months, you can wait to be vaccinated. However, remember to schedule your vaccine after 90-days.

CDC: COVID-19 vaccination should be offered to you regardless of whether you already had COVID-19 infection. You should not be required to have an antibody test before you are vaccinated. However, anyone currently infected with COVID-19 should wait to get vaccinated until after their illness has resolved and after they have met the criteria to discontinue isolation.

11. Can I choose which vaccine I will receive?

- a. **No.** The state determines the volume and types of shots made available to HHP. It is important that you receive the same vaccine for both doses. At this time, vaccines cannot be “mixed.” For example, if you receive the Pfizer vaccine for your first dose, you must get a Pfizer vaccine for your second dose. This is the same for the Moderna vaccine.

12. Will I need to still need wear a mask after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine?

- a. **Yes.** While data suggest the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are very effective, no vaccine is 100% effective, and we do not yet know how long immunity will last after getting the two required shots. Therefore, we must continue to follow public health guidelines, such as wearing a face covering, practicing hand hygiene, social distancing and avoiding indoor crowds.

13. Under what circumstances should somebody not receive the vaccine?

- a. You should **not** get the vaccine if you have had a *severe allergic reaction* to any ingredient in the vaccine, or if you had a *severe allergic reaction* to a previous dose of the vaccine - unless you have been cleared by your physician.

You can find the ingredients for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine and additional vaccine information on the [FDA website](#).

You can also find the ingredients for the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine and additional vaccine information on the [FDA website](#).

You should talk to your health care provider to decide if the vaccine is right for you if any of the following apply:

- You have a history of severe allergic reactions
- You are immunocompromised or are on a medication that affects your immune system

CDC: [Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines Currently Authorized in the United States](#)

14. Can the vaccine give you COVID-19?

- a. **No.** You cannot become infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, from the vaccine. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines include one little piece of what's known as messenger RNA (mRNA). This mRNA contains genetic instructions, which tell your cells to produce a viral "spike" protein. Your immune system recognizes this as a "threat" and mounts a response, producing antibodies that protect you against future infection. The little piece of RNA in the vaccine cannot replicate itself and it does not have any of the components needed to infect your body or spread the virus.

15. Can I go to work after my vaccine?

- a. **Yes.** You may experience some mild side effects for the next 2 days, this is common - it is the body producing antibodies and are not a sign of infection. However, should you develop a fever ($\geq 100.5^{\circ}\text{F}$) or your symptoms do not resolve within 2 days from onset (i.e., persist >4 days post vaccination) or symptoms develop >2 days after vaccination, please contact your healthcare provider.

16. It is better to get vaccinated or contract the virus naturally?

- a. It is better to get vaccinated. Getting the actual COVID-19 disease is much worse. With the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, you get only one piece of the virus's RNA, which is not able to replicate itself or spread. However, it does help you build up antibodies to keep the spike protein from infecting your cells. When the virus that causes COVID-19, called SARS-CoV-2, infects a cell, it injects all of its own genetic material into the cell to begin replicating itself. Contracting the virus naturally can cause both direct damage to cells and inflammation due to your immune system reacting, which can harm the entire body. In addition, you risk infecting other people around you if you contract the virus.

17. Should I be worried about an mRNA vaccine? Is this a new technology?

- a. Messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccine technology, used in the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, is new, but not unknown. While this is the first time mRNA has been used in a licensed vaccine, the structure and technology have been studied for years. In fact, the CDC notes that small, early-stage clinical trials using mRNA vaccines have been conducted for the flu, Zika and rabies. Advancements in biology and chemistry have improved mRNA vaccine safety and efficacy, and it is now thought to be *less* dangerous than other types of vaccines.

18. Can the COVID-19 vaccines alter your DNA?

- a. **No.** There is no way for the COVID-19 vaccine to alter your genetic material (DNA). This is a bit confusing, but mRNA is a short-lived, temporary messenger, and it only works in one direction. The RNA does not interact with your DNA and never enters the part of the cell where your DNA is located.

19. Can the COVID-19 vaccine cause infertility or sterility?

- a. **No.** There's absolutely no evidence that the vaccine interferes with fertility.

20. Can I get the vaccine if I'm pregnant or plan to become pregnant?

- a. Talk to your OB or primary physician to discuss the risks and benefits of getting the COVID-19 vaccine if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. *American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG)* recommends that COVID-19 vaccines should not be withheld from pregnant or lactating individuals who meet criteria for vaccination based on ACIP-recommended priority groups.

[ACOG - Practice Advisory](#)

21. Will the state of California require the COVID-19 vaccine?

- a. **No.** Just like getting the flu vaccine is not mandatory, getting the COVID-19 vaccine will not be mandatory either. However, it will likely be highly encouraged as a way to protect yourself and those around you.

22. If a person is infected with COVID-19 and recovers, are they immune?

- a. The quickest answer is, we don't know. There is not enough information currently available to say if or for how long after infection someone is protected from getting COVID-19 again. Current evidence suggests that reinfection with the virus that causes COVID-19 is uncommon in the 90 days after initial infection. The protection someone gains from having an infection (called natural immunity) varies depending on the viral load, and it varies from person to person.

23. I had my 1st dose already – can I get COVID-19 from someone that is COVID-positive?

- a. **Yes** - you can still contract COVID-19 from someone. After the 1st dose you do get some form of protection, which takes the body a few weeks to build. That means it's possible a person could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and get sick. This is because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection - plus you have not had the full protective immunity established by the 2nd dose. According to *Dr. Fauci*, "You get some degree, not optimal, but some degree of immunity a couple of weeks after the first dose. That's not optimal. After the second dose, you get optimal immunity anywhere from seven to 10 days after the second dose." However, because you had at least the 1st dose, you may experience a lesser severity of the disease.

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

No. Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines cannot cause you to test positive on viral tests, which are used to see if you have a current infection. Viral tests can be nucleic acid or antigen type tests – our physicians at HHP utilizes a nucleic acid test called reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR).

For example: If you have had your 1st dose vaccine and your COVID-19 test results are positive – unfortunately, you are positive for COVID-19 and will have to quarantine.

25. What is herd immunity?

- a. Herd immunity is when enough of a population has built up immunity to a virus that it can no longer easily spread. Researchers estimate that the United States would reach herd immunity for COVID-19 only after at least 60% to 70% of the population — about 200 million people — has been vaccinated.

Thank you and be safe!

