

COVID 19 FAQ Sheet

Updated January 2020

How do I know which sources of COVID-19 vaccine information are accurate? It can be difficult to know which sources of information you can trust. Learn more about [finding credible vaccine information](#).

Vaccine Basics

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

No. None of the authorized and recommended [COVID-19 vaccines](#) or [COVID-19 vaccines currently in development in the United States](#) contain the live virus that causes COVID-19. This means that a COVID-19 vaccine cannot make you sick with COVID-19.

There are several different types of vaccines in development. All of them teach our immune systems how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19.

Sometimes this process can cause symptoms, such as fever. These symptoms are normal and are a sign that the body is building protection against the virus that causes COVID-19. Learn more about [how COVID-19 vaccines work](#).

It typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity (protection against the virus that causes COVID-19) after vaccination. That means it's possible a person could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and still get sick. This is because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection. It is important to continue practicing social distancing and wearing a mask.

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

No. Neither the recently authorized and recommended vaccines nor the other COVID-19 vaccines currently in clinical trials in the United States can cause you to test positive on [viral tests](#), which are used to see if you have a current infection.

If your body develops an immune response– the goal of vaccination– there is a possibility you may test positive on some [antibody tests](#). Antibody tests indicate you had a previous infection and that you may have some level of protection against the virus. Experts are currently looking at how COVID-19 vaccination may affect antibody testing results.

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

Yes. Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that re-infection with COVID-19 is possible, vaccine should be offered to you regardless of whether you already had COVID-19 infection. CDC is providing recommendations to federal, state, and local governments about who should be vaccinated first.

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.

We won't know how long immunity produced by vaccination lasts until we have more data on how well the vaccines work.

Both natural immunity and vaccine-induced immunity are important aspects of COVID-19 that experts are trying to learn more about, and CDC will keep the public informed as new evidence becomes available.

Will a COVID-19 vaccination protect me from getting sick with COVID-19?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccination works by teaching your immune system how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19, and this protects you from getting sick with COVID-19.

Being protected from getting sick is important because even though many people with COVID-19 have only a mild illness, others may get a severe illness, have long-term health effects, or even die. There is no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you, even if you don't have an increased risk of developing severe complications. Learn more about how COVID-19 vaccines work.

Will a COVID-19 vaccine alter my DNA?

No. COVID-19 mRNA vaccines do not change or interact with your DNA in any way. Messenger RNA vaccines—also called mRNA vaccines—are the first COVID-19 vaccines authorized for use in the United States. mRNA vaccines teach our cells how to make a protein that triggers an immune response. 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 disease. Learn more about how COVID-19 mRNA vaccines work.

At the end of the process, our bodies have learned how to protect against future infection. That immune response and making antibodies is what protects us from getting infected if the real virus enters our bodies.

Who gets the vaccine and why?

Because the U.S. supply of COVID-19 vaccine is expected to be limited at first, CDC is providing recommendations to federal, state, and local governments about who should be vaccinated first. CDC's recommendations are based on those from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), an independent panel of medical and public health experts.

The recommendations were made with these goals in mind:

- Decrease death and serious disease as much as possible.
- Preserve functioning of society.
- Reduce the extra burden COVID-19 is having on people already facing disparities.

While CDC makes recommendations for who should be offered COVID-19 vaccine first, each state has its own plan for deciding who will be vaccinated first and how they can receive vaccines. Please contact your local health department for more information on COVID-19 vaccination in your area.

Health care personnel and residents of long-term care facilities should be offered the first doses of COVID-19 vaccines (1a)

CDC recommends that initial supplies of COVID-19 vaccine be allocated to health care personnel and long-term care facility residents. This is referred to as Phase 1a. Phases may overlap. CDC made this recommendation on December 3, 2020.

Health Care Personnel

[Learn more](#) about why it's important that health care personnel get vaccinated and who is included.

Long-term Care Facility Residents

[Learn more](#) about why it's important that residents of long-term care facilities get vaccinated and who is included:

Groups who should be offered vaccination next (1b and 1c)

CDC recommends that in Phase 1b and Phase 1c, which may overlap, vaccination should be offered to people in the following groups. CDC made [this recommendation](#) on December 22, 2020.

Phase 1b

- Frontline essential workers such as fire fighters, police officers, corrections officers, food and agricultural workers, United States Postal Service workers, manufacturing workers, grocery store workers, public transit workers, and those who work in the educational sector (teachers, support staff, and daycare workers.)
- People aged 75 years and older because they are at high risk of hospitalization, illness, and death from COVID-19. People aged 75 years and older who are also residents of long-term care facilities should be offered vaccination in Phase 1a.

Phase 1c

- People aged 65–74 years because they are at high risk of hospitalization, illness, and death from COVID-19. People aged 65–74 years who are also residents of long-term care facilities should be offered vaccination in Phase 1a.
- People aged 16–64 years with underlying medical conditions which increase the risk of serious, life-threatening complications from COVID-19.
- Other essential workers, such as people who work in transportation and logistics, food service, housing construction and finance, information technology, communications, energy, law, media, public safety, and public health.

As vaccine availability increases, vaccination recommendations will expand to include more groups

The goal is for everyone to be able to easily get a COVID-19 vaccination as soon as large enough quantities of vaccine are available. As vaccine supply increases but remains limited, ACIP will expand the groups recommended for vaccination.

Benefits of Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine

We understand that some people may be concerned about getting vaccinated now that COVID-19 vaccines are available in the United States. While more COVID-19 vaccines are being developed as quickly as possible, routine processes and

procedures remain in place to ensure the safety of any vaccine that is authorized or approved for use. Safety is a top priority, and there are many reasons to get vaccinated.

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

No. None of the COVID-19 vaccines contain the live virus that causes COVID-19 so a COVID-19 vaccine cannot make you sick with COVID-19. Facts about COVID-19 Vaccines

Below is a summary of the benefits of COVID-19 vaccination based on what we currently know. CDC will continue to update this page as more data become available.

COVID-19 vaccination will help keep you from getting COVID-19:

- All COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States have been shown to be highly effective at preventing COVID-19. Learn more about the different COVID-19 vaccines.
- All COVID-19 vaccines that are in development are being carefully evaluated in clinical trials and will be authorized or approved only if they make it substantially less likely you'll get COVID-19. Learn more about how federal partners are ensuring COVID-19 vaccines work.
- Based on what we know about vaccines for other diseases and early data from clinical trials, experts believe that getting a COVID-19 vaccine may also help keep you from getting seriously ill even if you do get COVID-19.
- Getting vaccinated yourself may also protect people around you, particularly people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- Experts continue to conduct more studies about the effect of COVID-19 vaccination on severity of illness from COVID-19, as well as its ability to keep people from spreading the virus that causes COVID-19.

COVID-19 vaccination is a safer way to help build protection:

- COVID-19 can have serious, life-threatening complications, and there is no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you. And if you get sick, you could spread the disease to friends, family, and others around you.
- Clinical trials of all vaccines must first show they are safe and effective before any vaccine can be authorized or approved for use, including COVID-19

vaccines. The known and potential benefits of a COVID-19 vaccine must outweigh the known and potential risks of the vaccine for use under what is known as an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). [Watch a video on what an EUA is.](#)

- Getting COVID-19 may offer some natural protection, known as immunity. Current evidence suggests that reinfection with the virus that causes COVID-19 is uncommon in the 90 days after initial infection. However, experts don't know for sure how long this protection lasts, and the risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 far outweighs any benefits of natural immunity. COVID-19 vaccination will help protect you by creating an antibody (immune system) response without having to experience sickness.
- Both natural immunity and immunity produced by a vaccine are important parts of COVID-19 disease that experts are trying to learn more about, and CDC will keep the public informed as new evidence becomes available.

COVID-19 vaccination will be an important tool to help stop the pandemic:

- Wearing masks and social distancing help reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus or spreading it to others, but these measures are not enough. Vaccines will work with your immune system so it will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed.
- The combination of getting vaccinated and following CDC's recommendations [to protect yourself and others](#) will offer the best protection from COVID-19.
- Stopping a pandemic requires using all the tools we have available. As experts learn more about how COVID-19 vaccination may help reduce spread of the disease in communities, CDC will continue to update the recommendations to protect communities using the latest science.
- Currently, two vaccines are authorized and recommended to prevent COVID-19 in the United States. To help guide decisions about how to distribute limited initial supplies of COVID-19 vaccine, CDC and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices have published recommendations for which [groups should be vaccinated first](#). It is understandable how concerning this may be for people, especially for [those who are at increased risk for serious illness](#) from this virus and for their loved ones.
- The goal is for everyone to be able to easily get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as large quantities are available. That is why, early in the response, the [federal government began investing in select vaccine manufacturersexternal icon](#) to

help them increase their ability to quickly make and distribute a large amount of COVID-19 vaccine. This will allow the United States to start with as much vaccine as possible and continually increase the supply in the weeks and months to follow. The goal is for everyone to be able to easily get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as large quantities are available. Several thousand vaccination providers will be available, including doctors' offices, retail pharmacies, hospitals, and federally qualified health centers.