GeoBlue

YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE COVID-19 VACCINES, ANSWERED

In the face of COVID-19, every question, answer and vaccination is important. That's why we're addressing uncertainties you may have about receiving a COVID-19 vaccine with facts from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to alleviate your concerns and arm you with the information you need to feel confident about getting vaccinated.

Q: Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccine?

A: No. You have to be exposed to the novel coronavirus to get COVID-19. The currently authorized vaccines are reproduced parts of the virus and not the live virus itself and teach our immune systems how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19.

Q: I've already had COVID-19. Do I still need to get vaccinated?

A: Health experts recommend the COVID-19 vaccine even for people who have had a COVID-19 infection. Although infection likely provides some immunity to reinfection, we don't know yet how long natural immunity lasts. So, it's important to still get vaccinated even if you've had COVID-19 to reduce the risk of reinfection—to protect yourself and others around you.

Q: Once I receive the COVID-19 vaccine, will I be immune for life, or will I need to receive future COVID-19 vaccinations?

A: At this time, it's still unknown how long immunity from having the COVID-19 infection or the COVID-19 vaccine will last and whether it will need to be administered more than once, or even on a regular basis, like the flu shot.

Q: Will a COVID-19 vaccine alter my DNA?

A: The COVID-19 vaccine will not alter your DNA, and none of the approved vaccines interact with your DNA. The approved Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines; they contain a bit of RNA (ribonucleic acid) that teaches the cells of the body how to make a protein that causes the immune system to make COVID-19 antibodies. The Janssen COVID-19 vaccine (Johnson & Johnson) is a viral vector vaccine that uses a modified version of a different virus (the vector) to deliver important instructions to our cells that trigger our immune system to begin producing antibodies will and activating other immune cells to fight off what it thinks is an infection. At the end of the process, our bodies will have learned how to protect us against future infection with the virus that causes COVID-19. Viral vectors cannot cause infection with the virus used as the vaccine vector.

Q: Will the vaccine work for everyone?

A: The COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the U.S. were proven to be highly effective across diverse races and genders. So, across the U.S., every family and neighborhood can expect the same effectiveness and protection.

Q: Do I really need to get both shots?

A: If you receive a two-dose vaccine such as the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine or the Moderna vaccine, getting both doses is crucial to the vaccine working. The first shot starts to build immunity, the second boosts the immune response. By getting both shots, we are maximizing the protection the vaccine can provide not only for ourselves, but those around us. The Janssen COVID-19 vaccine (Johnson & Johnson) is a one-dose vaccine that takes about 2 weeks to produce protective antibodies after injection.

Q: It seems like the vaccine was approved quickly. Is it as safe as other vaccines I've gotten?

A: COVID-19 vaccines have gone through the same rigorous safety assessment as all vaccines before being authorized for use in the U.S. by the FDA. When it comes to safety, you can be assured there have been no shortcuts. The unprecedented speed of the COVID-19 vaccines was due to multiple factors, including past research into these types of vaccines. COVID-19 is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Research was already underway to prevent past coronavirus diseases such as SARS and MERS and that experience helped jumpstart work on our current vaccines.

Q: If I get the vaccine, are there any side effects?

A: After vaccination, some people may develop a fever, muscle aches, headache, and/or fatigue. These side effects are related to the activation of the immune system. In most persons they last 1–2 days and don't require treatment.

Q: If I am allergic to eggs, should I still get the COVID-19 vaccine?

A: The current COVID-19 vaccines do not contain eggs or any animal products. However, those with a history of severe allergic reactions to eggs or any other substance (i.e., anaphylaxis) are encouraged to remain after vaccination for 30 minutes for observation. You should alert the vaccination team when you go for your appointment.

Q: Are the ingredients safe?

A: Yes, the currently authorized vaccines were shown to be very safe in large studies. Researchers have studied vaccines for decades and they've found that our bodies recognize parts of the virus (not live virus), and then can build a response (antibody) to protect us from the disease. This means the vaccine helps our bodies remember how to fight the virus if we're infected in the future.

Q: Will the COVID-19 vaccine cause infertility?

A: The COVID-19 vaccine, like other vaccines, works by training our bodies to develop antibodies to fight against the virus that causes COVID-19, to prevent future illness. There is currently no evidence that antibodies formed from COVID-19 vaccines cause any problems with pregnancy. In addition, there is no evidence suggesting that fertility problems are a side effect of ANY vaccine. People who are trying to become pregnant now or who plan to try in the future may receive the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available to them. Consult with your fertility or pregnancy care team if you have additional questions.

Q: Why do I have to wear a mask even after getting the vaccine?

A: The current vaccines protect against severe illness and death from COVID-19. It takes several weeks for the full effect of the vaccines to develop and protect you from illness. In addition, we only have early information on whether the vaccines prevent virus transmission from person to person.

Q: Why do I need the vaccine if everyone around me is getting it?

A: Herd immunity and community protection is the ultimate goal. That is achieved when a large portion of our entire population has been vaccinated. Current estimates are that at least 85% of our population will need to be vaccinated for COVID-19. Many adults have medical conditions that will prevent them from getting the vaccine even if they want it. So, it's up to each of us to keep them protected by doing our part and getting the vaccine for them.

Q: Is the vaccine free?

A: For the most up-to-date information on vaccination coverage, please refer to our COVID-19 Updates – Individual Members page.

The information provided here is accurate as of the time of publication in April 2021. The situation with the COVID-19 vaccine is continuously evolving. For the latest information about COVID-19 topics and how the pandemic can affect you and your family, visit www.cdc.gov/COVID19 or www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019. You can also contact your local health department or physician's office for additional COVID-19 vaccine information.

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