



# What to Expect after Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine

COVID-19 vaccination will help protect you from getting sick from COVID-19.

## Common side effects

You may have some side effects, which are normal signs that your body is building protection. Side effects include:

On the arm where you got the shot:

- Pain
- Redness
- Swelling

Throughout the rest of your body:

- Tiredness
- Muscle pain
- Fever
- Chills
- Headache
- Nausea

Side effects may feel like flu and even affect your ability to do daily activities, but they should go away in a few days.

Side effects are a sign that the vaccine is working to help teach your body how to fight COVID-19 if you are exposed. They do NOT mean you have COVID-19. You can't get COVID-19 from the vaccine.

If you have questions about your health after your vaccination, call your doctor or healthcare provider.

## Helpful tips

If you have pain or discomfort, talk to your healthcare provider about taking an over-the-counter medicine, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen.

To reduce pain and discomfort where you got the shot:

- Apply a clean, cool, wet washcloth over the area.
- Use or exercise your arm.

To reduce discomfort from fever:

- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Dress lightly.

## When to call the doctor

In most cases, discomfort from fever or pain is normal. Contact your doctor or healthcare provider:

- If the redness or tenderness where you got the shot increases after 24 hours
- If your side effects are worrying you or do not seem to be going away after a few days



City and County  
of San Francisco



[sf.gov/  
CovidVaccine](https://sf.gov/CovidVaccine)



# Protecting yourself, protecting others

## Timeline to protection

With some of the COVID-19 vaccines, you will need 2 doses in order for them to work. Get the second dose even if you have side effects after the first one, unless a vaccination provider or your healthcare provider tells you not to get a second dose.

It takes time for your body to build protection after any vaccination.

- COVID-19 vaccines that require 2 doses (the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines) may not protect you until about two weeks after your second dose.
- The COVID-19 vaccine that requires only 1 dose (the Janssen vaccine, also called Johnson & Johnson or J&J) takes about two weeks after vaccination for your body to build protection.

If you are fully vaccinated (i.e., 14 days have passed since your final shot), you can feel safer about your own health risks when participating in activities permitted by our state and local health departments. However, please consider the possible risk your exposure may have on those around you, especially those you live with and those who are unvaccinated, when you take part in activities that involve people outside your household.



Learn more at  
[sfcdcp.org/  
lifeaftervaccine](https://sfcdcp.org/lifeaftervaccine)

It's important for everyone to continue using all the tools available to help stop this pandemic as we learn more about how COVID-19 vaccines work in real-world conditions. These tools include:



Wearing a well-fitting mask



Keeping physical distance



Avoiding gatherings



Washing your hands



Staying home and getting tested if you feel sick

