

COVID-19 Vaccine FAQs

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About the Vaccine

How do COVID-19 vaccines work?

Vaccines work with your body's natural defenses so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. This is also called immunity. 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 the virus.

To learn more about how vaccines



work, see: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/how-they-work.html

Can the vaccines give me COVID-19?



No. None of the COVID-19 vaccines currently used or 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.

Are COVID-19 vaccines safe?



COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. Millions of people in the United States have received COVID-19 vaccines, and these vaccines have undergone the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history. Before being authorized for use, all COVID-19 vaccines were tested in clinical trials involving tens of thousands of people to make sure they met safety standards and protected adults of different ages, races, and ethnicities. There were no serious safety concerns in the trials. CDC and the FDA continue to monitor the vaccines to make sure they are safe.

Can the COVID-19 vaccines be used in children?

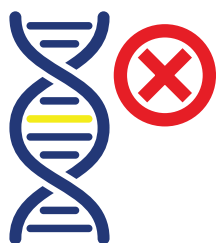
The focus of COVID-19 vaccine development has been on adults.



Pfizer's vaccine has been authorized for ages 16 and up. Moderna's vaccine is currently authorized for ages 18 and up. Studies are underway to ensure vaccines are safe and effective in children ages 12 and up before they are authorized for use in that age group.

Will the vaccine alter my DNA?

No. The vaccines do not affect or interact with our DNA in any way. The mRNA never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA (genetic material) is kept.



What are the ingredients in COVID-19 vaccines?

The two COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States do not contain eggs, preservatives, or latex.

For a full list of ingredients, please see each vaccine's Fact Sheet for Recipients and Caregivers:



Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine EUA Fact Sheet for Recipients and Caregivers (Pfizer): www.fda.gov/media/144414/download



Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine EUA Fact Sheet for Recipients and Caregivers (Moderna): www.fda.gov/media/144638/download

Can people still get the vaccine if they want to have children in the future?



Yes. People who want to get pregnant in the future can receive the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available to them. Based on current knowledge, medical experts believe the COVID-19 vaccines are unlikely to pose a short or long-term risk to those wanting to become pregnant.

Getting Vaccinated

When will I get vaccinated?



The COVID-19 vaccines are here, but supply is low. Even if you are eligible, there may not be a dose available right now. The vaccines are expected to be available to everyone by the end of 2021. The federal and state government is overseeing the distribution of vaccines. The state of California developed a prioritization plan for who gets vaccines when, given the limited vaccine supply.



For more on the priority plan and updates of who is getting vaccinated currently, see: covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/#When-can-I-get-vaccinated



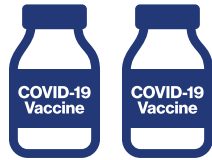


Sign up at sf.gov/vaccinenotify to get notified when you're eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine.

How can I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Many people will get vaccinated at one of the high-volume sites that the City and local healthcare providers are currently setting up. Vaccines will also be provided through select community clinics and pharmacies as well as neighborhood vaccine access sites.

How many COVID-19 vaccine doses are needed?



The vaccines currently available require two doses spaced 3–4 weeks apart. The first vaccination helps your body recognize the virus and helps prepare your immune system, and the second vaccination strengthens that immune response.

Is one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine effective?

Getting the second dose of the vaccine will make it more effective. When the COVID-19 vaccine becomes available to you, and after you receive your first dose, you should schedule the second dose appointment before leaving your doctor's office.

How much do vaccines cost?



Nothing. COVID-19 vaccines, including their administration, are free.

Will I be able to choose which vaccine I get?

No. The vaccine you get will be based on what your provider has available. SFDPH recommends you get a COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available to you.

Is taking the vaccine mandatory?

No, there is no mandatory vaccination requirement from either the state or federal government, but you are strongly encouraged to get the vaccine once it's available to you.

Do I need to have a COVID-19 test before I get the vaccine?



No, you do not need a COVID-19 test before getting a vaccine.

I have allergies. Should I take the vaccine?

CDC recommends that people with a history of severe allergic reactions not related to vaccines or injectable medications — such as food, pet, venom,



environmental, or latex allergies—get vaccinated. If you have had a severe allergic reaction to any ingredient in an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, you should not get either of the currently available mRNA COVID-19 vaccines. If you had a severe allergic reaction after getting the first dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, CDC recommends that you should not get the second dose.

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

Yes. You should get vaccinated even if you have already had COVID-19. While you may have some short-term protection after recovering from COVID-19, we don't know how long this protection will last.

Can I get the vaccine if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?



Yes. Pregnant individuals have a higher risk for complications from COVID-19 disease. There are no study results available yet on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in pregnant individuals. However, experts believe that the vaccines are unlikely to pose a risk to the individual or the fetus. Pregnant individuals can talk with a healthcare provider about their risk of COVID-19 disease and how they might benefit from vaccination.

Do I need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others if I have received the full vaccine?



Yes. The first vaccines approved in the US are about 95% effective in preventing sickness from COVID-19. However, we do not know how well they prevent infections that do not cause symptoms. This means that we do not know how common it is for a person who got the vaccine to carry the virus and transmit it to others, including those who have increased risk for severe illness or death.

Therefore, it is still very important for those who are vaccinated, and for the rest of the population who waits for their vaccines, to continue using all the tools available to help stop this pandemic:

- Wear a mask that covers your mouth and nose when outside your home
- Avoid gatherings
- Avoid being indoors with people you don't live with
- Stay at least 6 feet away from others
- Wash your hands often after touching shared objects or touching your face

These tools, together with COVID-19 vaccination, will offer the best protection from getting ill and spreading COVID-19.

Vaccine Effectiveness

Do the vaccines work differently or have different side effects for people of diverse ages, racial backgrounds, sexes, and other differences?

Trial results have shown that the vaccines are safe and work well for adults of all ages, races, genders, ethnic backgrounds and underlying medical conditions.

How long does it take to develop protection after vaccination?



It typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination. That means it's possible you could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and get sick.

How long will the COVID-19 vaccine last?

The research is not complete on this. Further research will tell us more about how long immunity lasts and if people will need more vaccinations in the future.

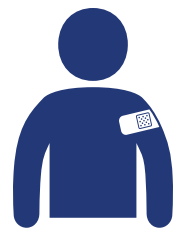
Can I still get COVID-19 after I get the vaccine?

It's possible. While current vaccines are shown to be highly effective in preventing people from getting sick from the virus, you can still get COVID-19 and be sick even if you get the vaccine. But until we can vaccinate everyone and because we don't know if the vaccine can stop you from spreading the virus, it's important to continue using all the tools available to help stop this pandemic: wear a mask that covers your mouth and nose when outside your home, avoid gatherings, avoid being indoors with people you don't live with, stay at least 6 feet away from others, and wash your hands often after touching shared objects or touching your face.

What to Expect After Vaccination

What are the side effects?

The vaccines may cause side effects in some people. For most people, these side effects will last no longer than 1–3 days.



Possible side effects include:

On the arm where you got the vaccination:

- Pain, redness, and swelling

Throughout the rest of your body:

- Fever
- Chills
- Headache
- Tiredness
- Joint and body aches

To reduce pain and discomfort where you got the vaccination:

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

To reduce symptoms, talk to your doctor about taking an over-the-counter medication such as Tylenol or Ibuprofen.

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, nurse, healthcare provider or clinic.

Are there long-term side effects from COVID-19 vaccine?

Because all COVID-19 vaccines are new, it will take more time and more people getting vaccinated to learn about possible long-term side effects. CDC and the FDA will keep closely monitoring the vaccines to look for safety issues after they are authorized and in use.

