

# COVID-19 Vaccines

Vaccines save millions of lives each year. Vaccines work by training and preparing the body's immune system to recognize and fight off the organism they target. There are many vaccines in development for COVID -19. Below are some common questions that may arise as you prepare for when COVID-19 vaccines become available.

## 1. Why is vaccination important?

Vaccination is a safe and effective way to prevent disease and save lives.

When we get vaccinated, we aren't just protecting ourselves, but also those around us. Some people, like those who are seriously ill, are advised not to get certain vaccines, so they depend on the rest of us to get vaccinated and help reduce the spread of disease.

## 2. How does a vaccine work?

Vaccines reduce the risk of getting a disease by working with your body's natural defenses to build protection. When you get a vaccine, your immune system responds. It:

- Recognizes the invading germ, such as the virus or bacteria.
- Produces antibodies. Antibodies are proteins produced naturally by the immune system to fight disease.
- Remembers the disease and how to fight it. If you are then exposed to the germ in the future, your immune system can quickly destroy it before you become unwell.

Our immune systems are designed to remember. Once exposed to one or more doses of a vaccine, we typically remain protected against a disease for a period of time. This is what makes vaccines so effective. Rather than treating a disease after it occurs, vaccines can prevent us from getting sick in the first place.

## 3. How do vaccines protect communities?

When a person gets vaccinated against a disease, their risk of infection is reduced – so they're also far less likely to spread the disease to others. As more people in a community get vaccinated, fewer people remain at risk, and there is less possibility for passing the infection on from person to person. Lowering the possibility for a virus or bacteria to spread in the community protects those who cannot be vaccinated due to other serious health conditions. This is called community immunity or "herd immunity." Because not everyone can be vaccinated, they depend on others being vaccinated to ensure they are also safe.

## 4. Can you get COVID-19 from a vaccine?

None of the COVID-19 vaccines currently in development in the United States use the live virus that causes COVID-19. There are several different types of vaccines in development. However, the goal for each of them is to 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 immunity. You can learn more about how COVID-19 vaccines work at this [CDC website](#).

It typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity 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 get sick. This is because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection.

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## 5. Will getting the vaccine cause me to test positive on a COVID-19 test?

Vaccines currently in clinical trials in the United States won't 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, which is the goal of vaccination, there is a possibility you may test positive on some antibody tests. Antibody tests show whether you had a previous infection and that you may have some protection against the virus. Experts are currently looking at how COVID-19 vaccination may affect antibody testing results.

See the public health [testing webpage](#) to learn more about COVID-19 tests.

## 6. How many COVID-19 vaccines are under development?

Many COVID-19 vaccines are currently under development. But there are only a few that have begun large-scale (phase 3) clinical trials in the United States. See posted guidance on [clinical and vaccine trials](#) to learn more about what phase 3 studies are.

## 7. How many shots of COVID-19 vaccine will be required?

All but one of the COVID-19 vaccines that are currently in phase 3 clinical trials in the United States use two shots, each administered a few weeks apart. The other COVID-19 vaccine uses one shot.

## 8. Is there a fee to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Vaccination providers may charge an administration fee for giving the shot to someone. Most public and private insurance companies will cover that fee so there is no cost for the person getting vaccinated. In addition, people without health insurance can get COVID-19 vaccines at no cost.

## 9. Will there be enough vaccine for everyone?

When the FDA first authorizes or approves the use of one or more COVID-19 vaccines in the United States, there may be a limited supply. This would mean that not everyone will be able to be vaccinated right away. The focus will most likely be to vaccinate those at highest risk for getting very sick if they get COVID-19. Over time, there will be increased production of approved vaccine with the goal of offering enough vaccine for everyone; this may take a few months.

## 10. Why would a vaccine be needed if we can do other things, like social distancing and wearing masks, to prevent the virus that causes COVID-19 from spreading?

Stopping a pandemic requires using all the tools available. Vaccines boost your immune system so it will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. Other steps, like masks and social distancing, help reduce your chance of being exposed to or spreading the virus. Together, COVID-19 vaccination and following public health recommendations for how to protect yourself and others will offer the best protection from COVID-19.

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## **11. If I have already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine when it's available?**

There is not enough information currently available to say if or for how long after infection someone is protected from getting COVID-19 again; this is called natural immunity. Early evidence suggests natural immunity from COVID-19 may not last very long, but more studies are needed to better understand this. Until we have a vaccine available and know more about natural immunity to COVID-19, we won't know whether people who had COVID-19 should get a COVID-19 vaccine.

## **12. Are there other vaccines that can help prevent me from getting COVID-19?**

A flu vaccine will not protect you from getting COVID-19, but it can prevent you from getting influenza (flu) at the same time as COVID-19. This can keep you from having a more severe illness. It is likely that flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 will both be spreading during this fall and winter. Getting a flu vaccine will be more important than ever.

## **13. What can I do now to help protect myself from getting COVID-19 since a vaccine is not yet available?**

You should cover your mouth and nose with a face covering when around others, avoid close contact with people who are sick, practice physical distancing, and wash your hands often. See posted guidance for [reducing your risk](#).