



# COVID-19 Vaccines

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Updated: April 19, 2021*

There are multiple vaccines for COVID-19 authorized for use in the United States. The vaccines are a safe and vital way to stop the spread of the virus, get back to work and get back to life. Below are answers to frequently asked questions about the vaccines.

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### **How do these vaccines work?**

Vaccines are intended to prepare your immune system should you ever be exposed to the actual virus, and the COVID-19 vaccines specifically teach our immune systems how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19.

### **Are they safe? Why is Johnson & Johnson on pause?**

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) only authorizes vaccines shown to be safe and effective, and the vaccines authorized for COVID-19 have passed rigorous scientific, clinical and regulatory requirements. They have been studied in clinical trials in large and diverse groups of people, of various ages, gender identities, races and ethnicities. Hundreds of millions of people around the world, from every racial and ethnic group, have been vaccinated safely. The FDA and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continue to monitor for any safety issues.

The CDC and the FDA are recommending a pause in the use of the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) COVID-19 vaccine to allow researchers at both agencies time to better understand a small number of reported cases of women developing a rare clotting disorder after receiving the vaccine. As of April 13, 6.8 million doses of the J&J vaccine have been administered and six cases of blood clots have been reported. All six known cases have occurred in women between the ages of 18 and 48, within six to 13 days of receiving the vaccine.

### **How did these vaccines get developed and approved so quickly?**

Researchers have been studying similar viruses and preparing for a scenario like this for many years. Now with a focused scientific effort and billions of dollars, we created multiple COVID-19 vaccines that have been shown to be safe and effective.

### **When will I receive the vaccine?**

As of April 19, 2021 all adults over age 16 are eligible for vaccination. The supply of vaccines is expected to increase significantly in the coming weeks.

### **Which vaccine should I take?**

COVID-19 vaccines have passed the same rigorous review process and have each proven highly effective, so it is recommended that you take whichever vaccine is available.

### **Are there side effects?**

Some people might get sore muscles, feel tired, or have mild fever after getting the vaccine. These reactions mean the vaccine is working to help teach your body how to fight COVID-19 if you are exposed. For most people, these side effects will last no longer than a few days. If you have any concerns, call your doctor or nurse.

## **Why do I have to take two doses?**

Some vaccines require two doses. Two doses of the same vaccine are necessary in order to be fully effective. You will likely make an appointment for your second dose at the time you receive your first dose. Keep in mind that it may take several weeks after vaccination for your body to be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed.

## **How many people need to get vaccinated? Can I skip it?**

Most experts agree that community immunity can be achieved when approximately 70 - 80% of the population is vaccinated. It is recommended that every adult in the U.S. be vaccinated unless their physician or CDC guidance recommends otherwise. By getting vaccinated, you can contribute to a safer workplace and help protect the people you know and love.

## **I've had COVID-19. Should I get the vaccine?**

Yes, you should still be vaccinated because you can become infected more than once. Although you may have some short-term natural protection (known as immunity) after recovering from COVID-19, we don't know how long this protection will last. Vaccination is the best protection, and it is safe. People who get COVID-19 can have serious illnesses, and some have terrible symptoms that continue for months. If you've had COVID-19, ask your doctor when you should be vaccinated.

## **How much does it cost?**

Nothing. The federal government is providing vaccines free of charge to all people living in the United States.

## **Are there those who should not get vaccinated?**

Children under 16 are currently not being vaccinated, as clinical testing is still underway. While there is currently no specific data on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines for pregnant or breastfeeding women, pregnant women are at high-risk for COVID-19 complications. Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding are encouraged to discuss the decision with their healthcare provider. If you have severe allergies, talk to your doctor about what precautions to take and when is the best time for you to be vaccinated.

## **Will I get COVID-19 from the vaccine?**

No, the vaccine does not cause COVID-19. None of the approved COVID-19 vaccines contain the virus that causes COVID-19. It does take a few weeks after vaccination for your body to build up antibodies to protect you from the virus. That means it's possible you could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after getting the vaccine and still get sick.

## **Can vaccinated people still transmit COVID-19?**

More real world data is needed to determine how successful the vaccines are at preventing transmission. While the vaccines are effective in preventing severe illness, it is still possible to get COVID-19 after immunization. The good news is that clinical trials have shown that the symptoms of COVID-19 infections after vaccination are less severe.

## **Do I still need to wear a mask after getting the vaccine?**

Yes. We all need to continue wearing face masks, practicing social distancing, and washing our hands while the vaccine is distributed. We are still learning how long the vaccine will protect us and whether we may still be able to transmit the virus to others who have not been vaccinated.

## If I've received the J&J vaccine, what should I do?

The purpose of the pause in the vaccine's use is to determine if there's any association, and the strength of the possible association, between the vaccine, the health of the six affected women and the clotting disorder. Having this information will help screen patients. Also, to be reviewed is what about the vaccine may have caused the disorder. According to the CDC, the number of cases at this point is too small to determine specific risk factors that might predispose someone to the clotting problem.

This clotting issue is very rare; fewer than one in 1 million people have experienced it after receiving the J&J shot.

The great majority of people who have received the J&J vaccine have not experienced any harmful side effects. According to the CDC, if you received your shot over a month ago your risk is very low and you don't need to take any specific action. If you have concerns, consult your doctor.

If you received the J&J vaccine within the last month and develop any of the following symptoms within three weeks of receiving your shot, you should contact your doctor or seek medical treatment: severe headache, blurred vision, fainting, seizures, abdominal pain, leg pain or shortness of breath. Mild fever, mild headache, fatigue and joint or muscle pain after vaccination are routine and typically go away within two to three days.

## What does the J&J pause mean for the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines?

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are continuing to be administered and continue to show very strong safety and efficacy. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are both mRNA technology vaccines. The J&J vaccine uses a different technology called vector vaccine.

As of April 13, many more people have safely received the Pfizer vaccine (36 million people fully vaccinated) and the Moderna vaccine (31 million people fully vaccinated) than people who have received the J&J vaccine (6.8 million doses administered). This greater experience with the Pfizer and Moderna shots provides more data on their safety and more reason to be confident about their continued use.

Furthermore, this pause in the use of the J&J vaccine means that the vaccine safety monitoring system is working. Responding to the pandemic has required many difficult decisions on the part of federal experts. They are working to balance vaccine safety while also vaccinating Americans as quickly as possible.

## What will happen next with the J&J vaccine?

The CDC and FDA have called for this pause in an "abundance of caution." They will continue to review the known cases of the clotting disorder and make further recommendations soon. CDC officials have said that the pause is intended to allow time to learn more about the clotting issue and share information with health care providers to help them recognize and treat the clotting problem.

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Health Action Alliance is committed to the health and safety of employees and communities. You should speak with your doctor or healthcare provider about whether COVID-19 vaccines are right for you. Please continue to slow the spread of COVID-19 by wearing a mask, avoiding large gatherings, washing your hands, and protecting yourself and your loved ones. Scientific understanding of guidelines and recommendations about the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccination are fluid. This information was compiled using accurate data from the sources cited below and may be updated.

**Together, we can turn the tide against COVID-19 and build a stronger, healthier future.**

Source: [CDC](#)