

COVID-19 Vaccine Overview



The COVID-19 pandemic continues to challenge our daily lives. Continued efforts to reduce spread are critical, and vaccines are one tool that can help control the pandemic. Since December 2020, three COVID-19 vaccines have been granted authorization for emergency use for adults and older adolescents (FDA, 2021). While approvals for children are likely still far off, adults will have access to these vaccines as supplies become available in the coming months (The White House, 2021).

Vaccines are one of many strategies to slow the spread of COVID. However, it is important to continue to follow CDC recommendations to keep yourself and others safe. For example, continue to wear a mask, stay six feet apart, avoid populated areas and wash your hands frequently (CDC, 2021d). For more information and resources, check out Child Care Aware® of America's [Coronavirus Hub](#).

What is the COVID- 19 Vaccine? Is it Safe and How Does it Work?

Unlike many other vaccines, the three FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines (Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna) do not contain a version of the virus (CDC, 2021f). Instead, these vaccines teach our immune system to fight COVID-19 (CDC, 2021e). These vaccines do not contain common allergens like egg, latex or preservatives (CDC, 2021d).

These COVID-19 vaccines have been through three rounds of clinical trials, a data safety review board and an application reviewed by expert scientists and physicians before being authorized by the FDA. (2021).

Some individuals may be hesitant or mistrusting of the safety of the vaccine due to documented systemic racism and discrimination in health care. Unfortunately, these same factors place non-White individuals at higher risk for COVID-19 infection and at higher risk for severe illness. The vaccines have been tested on a large group of diverse individuals and are the safest way to support our bodies' efforts to fight the coronavirus.

What to Expect After Receiving a Vaccine

People may react to the two vaccines in a variety of ways. Some individuals will only experience soreness or pain at the site of injection. Others may experience flu-like symptoms such as tiredness, fever, chills and headache. Both types of reactions are common, especially after the second dose, and should only last a few days.

After receiving a COVID-19 vaccine dose, you may experience some of these mild side effects. That doesn't mean you are sick; it means your immune system is working. More severe reactions are extremely rare. If these reactions last for longer than a few days or you experience more severe reactions such as hives, wheezing or swelling, please ask your health care provider whether you should receive a second dose (CDC, 2021c). Learn more about how you can report an adverse vaccine experience to the CDC [here](#).

Health Considerations

- Individuals must consider their own health when making decisions about vaccines. COVID-19 vaccines are the safest way to build up your immune system to prevent you from serious illness (CDC, 2021e). People who have already had COVID can still receive the vaccine as an extra protection against reinfection (CDC, 2021d).
- People over 65 and those with underlying health conditions (such as cancer, sickle cell disease, obesity and others) are at higher risk for serious COVID-19 complications, and vaccines reduce the risk of these complications (CDC, 2021d). [Click here](#) see the CDC's list of underlying medical conditions that increase risk of severe illness from COVID-19.
- The COVID-19 vaccines are considered safe for people who are pregnant or breastfeeding. Although research is still pending, the CDC does not perceive this to be a safety concern at this time (CDC, 2021d).
- Serious allergic reactions that require hospitalization or treatment with epinephrine or EpiPen® rarely occur (CDC, 2021c).

Resources

- [What to Expect at Your Appointment to Get Vaccinated for COVID-19](#)
- [Vaccination Considerations for Persons with Underlying Medical Conditions](#)
- [Vaccination Considerations for People who are Pregnant or Breastfeeding](#)
- [Ensuring the Safety of COVID-19 Vaccines in the United States](#)
- [What to Expect after Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine Fact Sheet](#)

Accessing Vaccines

Each state has developed their own vaccine distribution plan. For more information about plans in your state, [click here](#).

To find a vaccine site near you, visit vaccinefinder.org.

References

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