



COVID-19

Key Things to Know About COVID-19 Vaccines

Updated Oct. 4, 2021

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CDC now recommends that people aged 65 years and older, residents aged 18 years and older in long-term care settings, and people aged 50–64 years with [underlying medical conditions](#) **should** receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 Vaccine at least 6 months after completing their Pfizer-BioNTech primary series. Other groups **may** receive a booster shot based on their individual risk and benefit. [Learn more.](#)

What You Need to Know

- COVID-19 vaccines are effective at helping protect against severe disease and death from [variants of the virus](#) that causes COVID-19 currently circulating, including the Delta variant.
- [If you are fully vaccinated](#) you can resume many activities that you did before the pandemic, but you should wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an [area of substantial or high transmission](#) to maximize protection from the Delta variant and possibly spreading it to others.
- You may have [side effects](#) after vaccination. These are normal and should go away in a few days.
- [Learn how to find a COVID-19 vaccine](#) so you can get it as soon as you can.



What We Are Still Learning

- How well the vaccines protect people with weakened immune systems, including people who take medicines that suppress the immune system
- How long COVID-19 vaccines protect people
- How many people have to be vaccinated against COVID-19 before the population can be considered protected (population immunity)
- How effective the vaccines are against new variants of the virus that causes COVID-19



COVID-19 Vaccine ChatBot

Use SmartFind chat tool to find answers to common COVID-19 vaccination questions.

[Get Started](#)

Availability of Vaccines

What we know

WHAT WE KNOW

Vaccines are widely accessible in the United States. Everyone aged 12 years and older should [get a COVID-19 vaccination](#) as soon as possible.

Vaccines are widely accessible in the United States and are [available for everyone at no cost](#). Learn more about [how COVID-19 vaccines get to you](#).

Many doctors' offices, retail pharmacies, hospitals, and clinics offer COVID-19 vaccinations. Parents, check with your child's healthcare provider about whether they offer COVID-19 vaccination.

Effectiveness

What we know

COVID-19 vaccines are effective at protecting you from COVID-19, especially severe illness and death. COVID-19 vaccines reduce the risk of people spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. If you are fully vaccinated, you can resume activities that you did before the pandemic. Learn more about what you can do [when you have been fully vaccinated](#).

Studies show that COVID-19 vaccines are effective at keeping you from getting COVID-19. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine will also help keep you from getting seriously ill even if you do get COVID-19. Learn more about the [benefits of getting vaccinated](#).

COVID-19 vaccines teach our immune systems how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19. It typically takes 2 weeks after vaccination for the body to build protection (immunity) against the virus that causes COVID-19. That means it is possible a person could still get COVID-19 before or just after vaccination and then get sick because the vaccine did not have enough time to build protection. People are considered fully vaccinated 2 weeks after their second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines, or 2 weeks after the single-dose Johnson & Johnson's Janssen COVID-19 vaccine.

People with moderately to severely compromised immune systems should [receive an additional dose](#) of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine after the initial 2 doses.



What we are still learning

We are still learning how well COVID-19 vaccines protect people with weakened immune systems, including people who take medicines that suppress the immune system. We're also still learning how long COVID-19 vaccines protect people.

If you have a medical condition or are taking medicines that weaken your immune system, you should talk to your healthcare provider. You may need to keep taking all [precautions](#) to prevent COVID-19 disease.

Safety

What we know

COVID-19 vaccines are [safe and effective](#). Vaccines cannot give you COVID-19. You may have side effects after vaccination. These are normal and should go away in a few days.

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. This monitoring includes using both established and new safety monitoring systems to make sure that COVID-19 vaccines are safe. COVID-19 vaccines cannot give you COVID-19. Learn more to [bust myths and learn the facts about COVID-19 vaccines](#).

CDC has developed a new tool, **v-safe**, to help us quickly find any safety issues with COVID-19 vaccines. **V-safe** is a smartphone-based, after-vaccination health checker for people who receive COVID-19 vaccines. Learn how the federal government is [working to ensure the safety of COVID-19 vaccines](#).

While COVID-19 vaccines were developed rapidly, [all steps have been taken to ensure their safety and effectiveness](#).

You may have side effects after vaccination, but these are normal

After COVID-19 vaccination, you may have some side effects. These are normal signs that your body is building protection. The side effects from COVID-19 vaccination, such as tiredness, headache, or chills, may affect your ability to do daily activities, but they should go away in a few days. Learn more about [what to expect after getting vaccinated](#).

Population Immunity

What we know

Population immunity, also known as herd immunity or community immunity, means that enough people in a community are protected from getting a disease because they've already had the disease or because they've been vaccinated.

Population immunity makes it hard for a disease to spread from person to person. It even protects those who cannot be vaccinated, like newborns or people who are allergic to a vaccine. The percentage of people who need to have protection to achieve population immunity varies by disease.

What we are still learning

We are still learning **how many people** have to be vaccinated against COVID-19 before the population can be considered protected.

As we know more, CDC will continue to update our recommendations for both vaccinated and unvaccinated people.

Variants and Vaccines

- FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines help protect against [Delta and other known variants](#).
- These vaccines are effective at keeping people from getting COVID-19, getting very sick, and dying.
- To maximize protection from the [Delta variant](#) and prevent possibly spreading it to others, you should wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an [area of substantial or high transmission](#) even if you are fully vaccinated.
- We don't know how effective the vaccines will be against new variants that may arise.

New Variants

What we know

COVID-19 vaccines are effective against severe disease and death from variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 currently circulating in the United States, including the Delta variant.

- Infections happen in only a small proportion of people who are fully vaccinated, even with the Delta variant. When these infections occur among vaccinated people, they tend to be mild.
- If you are fully vaccinated and become infected with the Delta variant, you might be able to spread the virus to others.
- People with weakened immune systems, including people who take immunosuppressive medications, may not be protected even if fully vaccinated.



For Healthcare and Public Health

[Clinical and Professional Resources](#): Toolkits and resources for healthcare workers and public health professionals.

Related Pages

- › [When You've Been Fully Vaccinated](#)
- › [Myths and Facts about COVID-19 Vaccines](#)
- › [Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccination](#)
- › [Benefits of Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

Last Updated Oct. 4, 2021