



COVID-19

Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccination

Updated Dec. 20, 2021

CDC has updated its recommendations for COVID-19 vaccines with a preference for people to receive an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna). Read [CDC's media statement](#).

Below are answers to commonly asked questions about COVID-19 vaccination.

Have more questions? Visit [FAQs about Vaccination in Children](#) and [Myths and Facts about COVID-19 Vaccines](#).

Safety

Are COVID-19 vaccines safe even though the vaccines were developed rapidly? 

While COVID-19 vaccines were developed rapidly, all steps were taken to make sure they are safe and effective:

- **Approach to Development** – Scientists have been working for many years to develop vaccines against viruses like the one that causes COVID-19. This knowledge helped speed up the initial development of the current COVID-19 vaccines.
- **Clinical Trials** – All vaccines in the United States must go through [three phases of clinical trials](#) to make sure they are safe and effective. During the development of COVID-19 vaccines, phases overlapped to speed up the process, but all phases were completed.
- **Authorization or Approval** – Before vaccines are available to people, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) assesses the findings from clinical trials. FDA determined that [three COVID-19 vaccines](#) met FDA's safety and effectiveness standards and granted those vaccines [Emergency Use Authorizations \(EUAs\)](#) . This allowed the vaccines to be quickly distributed to control the pandemic. Before recommending COVID-19 vaccination for children, scientists conducted clinical trials. The FDA gave the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine emergency authorization to use in children ages 5 years through 15 years old and full approval to use in people ages 16 years and older. Read more about [the first COVID-19 vaccine to receive FDA approval](#) .
- **Manufacturing and Distribution** – The U.S. government has invested substantial resources to manufacture and distribute COVID-19 vaccines. This allowed vaccine distribution to begin as soon as FDA authorized each vaccine.
- **Tracking Safety Using Vaccine Monitoring Systems** – COVID-19 vaccine safety monitoring has been the most intense and comprehensive in U.S. history. Hundreds of millions of people in the United States have received COVID-19 vaccines. Through several [monitoring systems](#), CDC and FDA continue to provide updated information on the [safety of these vaccines](#).

Learn more about [developing COVID-19 vaccines](#).

What are the ingredients in COVID-19 vaccines? 

Vaccine ingredients vary by manufacturer. None of the vaccines contain eggs, gelatin, latex, or preservatives. All COVID-19 vaccines are **free from metals** such as iron, nickel, cobalt, lithium, and rare earth alloys. They are also free from manufactured products such as microelectronics, electrodes, carbon nanotubes, or nanowire semiconductors.

To learn more about the ingredients in authorized COVID-19 vaccines, see

- [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine Overview and Safety](#)
- [Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine Overview and Safety](#)
- [Johnson & Johnson's Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine Overview and Safety](#)
- [Ingredients Included in COVID-19 Vaccines](#)

If I am pregnant or planning to become pregnant, can I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for [people who are pregnant](#), breastfeeding, trying to get pregnant now, or who [might become pregnant in the future](#). You might want to have a conversation with your healthcare provider about COVID-19 vaccination. While such a conversation might be helpful, it is not required before vaccination. Learn more about [vaccination considerations for people who are pregnant or breastfeeding](#).

If you are pregnant and have received a COVID-19 vaccine, we encourage you to enroll in [v-safe](#), CDC's smartphone-based tool that provides personalized health check-ins after vaccination. A [v-safe pregnancy registry](#) has been established to gather information on the health of pregnant people who have received a COVID-19 vaccine.

Why should my child get vaccinated against COVID-19?

Vaccinating children ages 5 years and older can help protect them from getting COVID-19, spreading the virus to others, and getting sick if they do get infected. While COVID-19 tends to be milder in children than adults, it can make children very sick, require hospitalization, and some children have even died. Children with underlying medical conditions are more at risk for severe illness compared to children without underlying medical conditions.

Getting your child vaccinated helps to protect your child and your family, including siblings who are not eligible for vaccination and family members who may be at risk of getting very sick if infected. Vaccination is now [recommended for everyone ages 5 years and older](#). Currently, the [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#) is the only one available to children ages 5 years and older.

COVID-19 vaccines have been used under the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history. Scientists have conducted clinical trials with thousands of children, and the results show that COVID-19 vaccines are [safe](#) and [effective](#).

Your child cannot get COVID-19 from any COVID-19 vaccine, and there is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines cause fertility problems.

Your child may have some [side effects](#), which are similar to those seen with other routine vaccines and are a normal sign that their body is building protection. These side effects may affect their ability to do daily activities, but they should go away in a few days. Some people have no side effects and severe allergic reactions are very rare.

Related pages:

- [COVID-19 Vaccines for Children and Teens](#)
 - [Pfizer-BioNTech](#)
 - [Possible Side Effects](#)
 - [Families and Children](#)
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Getting Your Vaccine

Do I need a booster? How many doses of COVID-19 vaccine will I need to get? 

COVID-19 Vaccine Primary Series

The number of vaccine doses you need depends on which vaccine you receive.

- Two doses of [Pfizer-BioNTech](#) vaccine should be given 3 weeks (21 days) apart.
- Two doses of [Moderna](#) vaccine should be given 4 weeks (28 days) apart.
- Only one dose of Johnson & Johnson's Janssen ([J&J/Janssen](#)) vaccine should be given.

If you receive a vaccine that requires two doses, you should [get your second shot as close to the recommended interval as possible](#). You should **not** get the second dose earlier than the recommended interval.

COVID-19 vaccines **are not** interchangeable for your COVID-19 vaccine primary series. If you received a Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine for your first shot, you should get the same product for your second shot.

Additional Primary Dose If You Are Immunocompromised

If you received a Pfizer-BioNTech (ages 12 and older) or Moderna (ages 18 and older) mRNA COVID-19 vaccine primary series and have a moderately or severely compromised immune system, you should [receive an additional primary dose](#) of the same mRNA COVID-19 vaccine at least 28 days after the second dose.

Additional primary doses **are not** interchangeable. The vaccine used for the additional primary dose should be the same as the vaccine used for the primary vaccine series. If the mRNA vaccine product given for the first two doses is not available or is unknown, either mRNA COVID-19 vaccine product may be administered.

Currently, CDC does not recommend an **additional primary dose** if you received a single-dose J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine or in children less than 12 years old with moderate or severely compromised immune systems.

Booster Shot

Everyone ages 16 years and older can get a [booster shot](#) after they have completed their COVID-19 vaccine primary series. People ages 16 to 17 years old can get the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 booster shot.

People ages 18 years and older have the option to either get the same COVID-19 vaccine product as their primary series, or to get a different COVID-19 vaccine. People may have a preference for the vaccine type that they originally received, or they may prefer to get a different booster. CDC's recommendations now allow for this type of mix and match dosing for booster shots (Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, or J&J/Janssen) for people ages 18 years and older. You may consider the benefits and risks of each product and discuss with your healthcare provider which COVID-19 vaccine product is the most appropriate booster for you.

Currently, a booster shot is not recommended for [children younger than 16 years old](#).

If I didn't get my second shot of a 2-dose COVID-19 vaccine within the recommended time, what should I do? 

You should [get your second shot as close to the recommended 3-week or 4-week interval as possible](#). There is currently limited information on the effectiveness of receiving your second shot later than 6 weeks after the first shot. However, if you receive your second shot of COVID-19 vaccine at any time after the recommended date, you do not have to restart the vaccine series, and you can be considered [fully vaccinated](#) 2 weeks after getting your second shot. This guidance might be updated as more information becomes available.

Learn more about [COVID-19 vaccines that require 2 shots](#).

How long does protection from a COVID-19 vaccine last?

We don't know yet how long COVID-19 vaccine protection lasts. Recent studies show that protection against the virus may decrease over time. This reduction in protection has led CDC to recommend that everyone ages 18 years and older get a booster shot after completing their primary vaccination series.

People who received the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine for their primary series should get a booster shot at least 6 months after completing the primary series. People who received Johnson & Johnson's Janssen COVID-19 vaccine should get a booster shot at least 2 months after getting their first shot.

At this time, CDC recommends getting only one COVID-19 booster shot. CDC continues to review evidence and will update guidance as more information is available.

Learn more about [COVID-19 vaccine booster shots](#).

Related page:

- [Vaccines Work](#)

Preparing for Your Vaccine

How long do I need to wait after getting a flu vaccine or another vaccine before getting a COVID-19 vaccine?

You can get a COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines, including a [flu vaccine](#), at the same visit. Experience with other vaccines has shown that the way our bodies develop protection, known as an immune response, and possible side effects after getting vaccinated are generally the same when given alone or with other vaccines. Learn more about [the timing of other vaccines](#).

If I already had COVID-19 and recovered, am I protected by natural immunity, or do I still need to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

You should get a COVID-19 vaccine even if you already had COVID-19.

Getting sick with COVID-19 offers some protection from future illness with COVID-19, sometimes called "natural immunity." The level of protection people get from having COVID-19 may vary depending on how mild or severe their illness was, the time since their infection, and their age. No currently available test can reliably determine if a person is protected from infection.

[All COVID-19 vaccines currently available](#) in the United States are [effective](#) at preventing COVID-19. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine gives most people a high level of protection against COVID-19 even in people who have already been sick with COVID-19.

[Emerging evidence](#) shows that getting a COVID-19 vaccine after you recover from COVID-19 infection provides added protection to your immune system. [One study](#) showed that, for people who already had COVID-19, those who do not get vaccinated after their recovery are more than 2 times as likely to get COVID-19 again than those who get fully vaccinated after their recovery.

People who were treated for COVID-19 with monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma or people who have a history of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in adults or children ([MIS-A](#) or [MIS-C](#)) may [need to wait](#) a while after recovering before they can get vaccinated. Talk to your doctor if you are unsure what treatments you received or if you have more questions about getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

Related pages:

- [Benefits of Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine | CDC](#)
- [Preparing for Your COVID-19 Vaccination | CDC](#)

Can I get vaccinated against COVID-19 while I am currently sick with COVID-19?

No. People with COVID-19 who have symptoms should wait to be vaccinated until they have recovered from their illness and have met the [criteria](#) for discontinuing isolation; those without symptoms should also wait until they [meet the criteria](#) before getting vaccinated. This guidance also applies to people who get COVID-19 before getting their second dose of vaccine.

People who have had a known COVID-19 exposure should not seek vaccination until their quarantine period has ended to avoid potentially exposing healthcare personnel and others during the vaccination visit. This recommendation also applies to people with a known COVID-19 exposure who have received their first dose of an mRNA vaccine but not their second.

Related pages:

- [When to Quarantine](#)
- [Ending Home Isolation](#)

Can I choose which COVID-19 vaccine I get?

Currently, the [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#) is the only one available to children ages 5 years through 17 years. For adults 18 years and older, CDC does not recommend one vaccine over another. All currently authorized and recommended COVID-19 vaccines are [safe](#) and [effective](#). The most important decision is to get a COVID-19 vaccination as soon as possible. Widespread vaccination is a critical tool to help stop the pandemic.

People should be aware that a risk of a rare condition called thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS) has been reported following vaccination with the J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine. TTS is a serious condition that involves blood clots with low platelet counts. This problem is rare, and most reports were in women between 18 and 49 years old. For women 50 years and older and men of any age, this problem is even more rare. There are other COVID-19 vaccine options available for which this risk has not been seen (Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna).

Learn more about [your COVID-19 vaccination](#), including how to find a vaccination location, what to expect at your appointment, and more.

Related page:

- [Your Vaccination](#)
- [Safety of COVID-19 Vaccines](#)
- [Ensuring COVID-19 Vaccines Work](#)

After Your Vaccine

How can I get a new COVID-19 vaccination card?

If you need a new vaccination card, contact the vaccination provider site where you received your vaccine. Your provider should give you a new card with up-to-date information about the vaccinations you have received.

If the location where you received your COVID-19 vaccine is no longer operating, contact your state or local health department's [immunization information system \(IIS\)](#) for assistance.

CDC does **not** maintain vaccination records or determine how vaccination records are used, and CDC does **not** provide the CDC-labeled, white COVID-19 vaccination record card to people. These cards are distributed to vaccination providers by state and local health departments. Please [contact your state or local health department](#) if you have additional questions about vaccination cards or vaccination records.

Related page:

- [Getting Your CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card](#)

Do I need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others if I am fully vaccinated?

After you are fully vaccinated for COVID-19, take these steps to protect yourself and others:

- In general, you do not need to wear a mask in outdoor settings.
- If you are in an area with [high numbers of COVID-19 cases](#), consider wearing a mask in crowded outdoor settings and when you are in [close contact](#) with others who are not fully vaccinated.
- If you have a condition or taking medications that weaken your immune system, you may not be fully protected even if you are fully vaccinated. You should continue to take all [precautions recommended for unvaccinated people, including wearing a well-fitted mask](#), until advised otherwise by their healthcare provider.
- If you are fully vaccinated, to maximize protection from the Delta variant and prevent possibly spreading it to others, wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an area [of substantial or high transmission](#).

I was fully vaccinated in another country. How do I transfer my proof of vaccination from that country to get a proof of vaccination card in the United States?

CDC does **not** keep vaccination records or determine how vaccination records are used. To update your records with vaccines you received while outside of the United States, you may:

- Contact the immunization information system (IIS) in your state. You can find state IIS information on the [CDC website](#).
- Contact your healthcare provider or your local or state immunization program through your [state's health department](#).

The CDC-labeled white COVID-19 Vaccination Record Cards are only issued to people vaccinated in the United States. CDC recommends you keep your documentation of being vaccinated in the other country as proof of vaccination. CDC also recommends checking with your primary care provider or state health department for options to document your vaccination status domestically.

Am I considered fully vaccinated if I was vaccinated in another country?

You are considered [fully vaccinated](#) if you

- Received any single-dose COVID-19 vaccine series that is authorized or approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or listed for emergency use by World Health Organization (WHO).
- *Received [any combination](#) of two doses of an FDA approved/authorized or WHO emergency use listed COVID-19 two-dose series with at least 17 days between doses.

**CDC does not recommend mixing different COVID-19 vaccines for the primary series, but CDC is aware that this is increasingly common in many countries outside of the United States. Therefore, for the interpretation of vaccination records, these people are considered fully vaccinated.*

Accepted COVID-19 Vaccines

	Vaccines Approved or Authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration	Vaccines Listed for Emergency Use (EUL) by the World Health Organization
Single dose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Janssen/J&J 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Janssen/J&J
2-dose series	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pfizer-BioNTech • Moderna 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pfizer-BioNTech • Moderna • AstraZeneca • Covishield • BIBP/Sinopharm • Sinovac • Bharat Biotech (COVAXIN)

If you received a COVID-19 vaccine that is **not** authorized or approved by FDA or listed for emergency use by WHO, you may start over with an FDA-authorized or approved COVID-19 vaccine. Please note that no data are available on the safety or effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccination after receiving a non-FDA-authorized or approved COVID-19 vaccine. Wait at least 28 days after you received the last dose of the non-FDA-authorized or approved vaccine before receiving an FDA-authorized or approved COVID-19 vaccine.

Visit the [clinical considerations webpage](#) for more information.

Am I eligible to receive a booster shot and/or additional primary dose if I was fully vaccinated in another country?

People who have been fully vaccinated outside the United States with a COVID-19 vaccine that is [FDA-approved](#) or [FDA-authorized](#) are eligible to receive an additional primary dose and/or a booster dose, according to the same guidance for people who received these vaccines in the United States.

People who have been fully vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine that is **not** FDA-approved or FDA-authorized but is listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization (WHO) and people who completed a mixed vaccine series composed of any combination of FDA-approved, FDA-authorized, or [WHO Emergency Use Listed COVID-19 vaccines](#)  are also eligible to receive an additional primary dose (for people with weakened immune systems) and/or a booster dose.

Additional primary dose for those who are moderately or severely immunocompromised

A number of people who are [moderately or severely immunocompromised](#) and who were vaccinated abroad should receive an additional primary dose if they meet the following conditions:

- Moderately or severely immunocompromised **who are ages 12 and older and have been fully vaccinated** should receive an additional primary dose of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine at least 28 days after receiving the second vaccine dose of their vaccine primary series. Fully vaccinated includes completing a vaccine primary series for:
 - [not FDA-Authorized or FDA-approved](#)  vaccine but is listed for emergency use by WHO and people who completed a mix and match series composed of any combination of FDA-approved,
 - FDA-authorized vaccine, or
 - WHO Emergency Use Listed COVID-19 vaccines.

Single-dose booster shots

[Booster shots](#) should be obtained by people who meet the following conditions. Those who have been fully vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine that is not FDA-authorized or FDA-approved but is listed for emergency use by WHO and people who completed a mix and match series composed of any combination of FDA-approved, FDA-authorized, or WHO Emergency Use Listed COVID-19 vaccines. Of these people, those who also are:

- 16 years and older receive a single booster dose of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine at least 6 months after completing their primary series.
- This also includes people ages 16 years and older who are moderately or severely immunocompromised. These people **should receive** a single Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 booster shot at least 6 months after completing their additional primary dose.

Visit the [clinical considerations webpage](#) for more information.

Answers to more questions about:

- [Healthcare Professionals and COVID-19 Vaccines](#)
- [Vaccines.gov](#)
- [Vaccine Administration Management System \(VAMS\)](#)
- [V-safe after Vaccination Health Checker](#)

Last Updated Dec. 20, 2021