Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccination

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In the United States, there is currently no authorized or approved vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Operation Warp Speed has been working since the pandemic started to make a COVID-19 vaccine(s) available as soon as possible. CDC is focused on vaccine planning, working closely with health departments and partners to get ready for when a vaccine is available. CDC does not have a role in developing COVID-19 vaccines.

Below are answers to commonly asked questions. Regular updates will be made as needed.

What is Operation Warp Speed's role with COVID-19 vaccines?

Operation Warp Speed is a partnership among components of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Defense to help develop, make, and distribute millions of vaccine doses for COVID-19 as quickly as possible while ensuring that the vaccines are safe and that they work. Learn more about Operation Warp Speed:

- HHS Fact Sheet: Explaining Operation Warp Speed
- New England Journal of Medicine article: Developing Safe and Effective COVID Vaccines — Operation Warp Speed's Strategy and Approach

How many COVID-19 vaccines are under development?

Multiple COVID-19 vaccines are under development. As of October 13, 2020, four vaccines have begun large-scale (phase 3) clinical trials in the United States.

How many shots of COVID-19 vaccine will be needed?

All but one of the COVID-19 vaccines currently in phase 3 clinical trials in the United States use two shots. The other COVID-19 vaccine uses one shot.

Who is paying for COVID-19 vaccine?

The federal government is committed to providing free or low-cost COVID-19 vaccines. Vaccine doses purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars will be given to the American people at no cost. However, vaccination providers will be able to 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.

Will there be enough vaccine for everyone?

When 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. It is understandable how concerning this will be for people, especially for those who are at increased risk for serious illness from this virus and for their loved ones.

That is why, early in the response, the federal government began investing in select vaccine manufacturers to help them increase their ability to quickly make and distribute a large amount of COVID-19 vaccine. This will allow the United States to start with as much vaccine as possible and continually increase the supply in the weeks and months to follow. The goal is for everyone to be able to easily get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as large quantities are available. Whether it's at their doctor's office, retail pharmacy, hospital, or federally qualified health center, several thousand vaccination providers will be available so no one will have to travel far to be vaccinated.

Are there special considerations on who should get the COVID-19 vaccine first?

At first, there may be a limited supply of COVID-19 vaccine(s). Operation Warp Speed will work to get those first vaccine doses out once a vaccine is authorized or approved and recommended, rather than waiting until there are enough vaccines for everyone. However, it is important that the initial vaccines are given to people in a fair, ethical, and transparent way. Learn how CDC is making COVID-19 vaccine recommendations, including recommendations if there is a limited supply, based on input from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).

Has there been a coronavirus vaccine developed before? What's known about it, and can it be helpful today in working toward a COVID-19 vaccine?

Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) are two diseases caused by coronaviruses that are closely related to the virus that causes COVID-19. Researchers began working on developing vaccines for these diseases after they were discovered in 2003 and 2012, respectively. None of the SARS vaccines ever made it past the first stages of development and testing. One MERS vaccine (MVA-MERS-S) successfully completed a phase 1 clinical trial in 2019. Some researchers are taking lessons learned from this earlier vaccine research to inform their strategy for developing a COVID-19 vaccine.

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 CDC's recommendations for how to protect yourself and others will offer the best protection from COVID-19.

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, CDC cannot comment on whether people who had COVID-19 should get a COVID-19 vaccine. Once a vaccine has been authorized or approved, ACIP will make recommendations to CDC on who should get a COVID-19 vaccine.

Are there other vaccines that can help prevent me from getting COVID-19?

There are currently no available vaccines that will prevent COVID-19. However, multiple agencies and groups in the United States are working together to make sure that a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine is available as quickly as possible.

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. While it's not possible to say with certainty what will happen in the fall

and winter, CDC believes it's likely that flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 will both be spreading during that time. That means that getting a flu vaccine will be more important than ever.

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 mask when around others, avoid close contact with people who are sick, practice social distancing, and wash your hands often. Get more information about these and other steps you can take to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

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