



# HEALTHCARE WORKERS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Who is being prioritized for COVID-19 vaccine?

Healthcare workers like you have been working to serve patients and residents since the beginning of the pandemic. This includes clinical staff (such as nurses, physicians, technicians, medical assistants) and non-clinical staff (such as food and environmental services staff). Healthcare workers can now receive a vaccine to protect against COVID-19.

Residents in Long-term care settings and staff are also prioritized to receive COVID-19 vaccine because COVID-19 disease spread has been severe in these settings.

## Why are healthcare workers, long-term care staff, and residents in long-term care prioritized for COVID-19 vaccine?

Because supply will be limited at first, priority will go to healthcare workers and long-term care staff who are most likely to be exposed to COVID-19 through direct or indirect contact with patients or residents. Getting vaccinated is especially important because of the critical role you serve and the risks you take to help keep our community safe.

In addition, residents of long-term care settings are prioritized because they are more likely to be hospitalized or die from COVID-19. Vaccinating staff and residents is an effective way to prevent outbreaks. Read more about [California's guidelines for prioritization](#).

## If I don't have direct contact with patients, why should I get vaccinated?

You are essential to keeping the healthcare system working. You could be exposed to COVID-19 at work or outside of work. Immune protection works best when everyone is vaccinated, so when COVID-19 vaccine is offered to you, you are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated.

## Will I have to get vaccinated?

Getting COVID-19 vaccine is recommended. Vaccination against COVID-19 is important because as essential workers, you not only protect yourself, but also your family, patients, and communities.

Trusted sources of information such as your doctor or the [CDC](#) can provide up-to-date information. Check with your employer and/or union about workplace vaccination policies.

## What can I expect before, during, and after COVID-19 vaccination?

Before getting vaccinated, learn about COVID-19 vaccines and see if vaccination is recommended for you. During your vaccination appointment, you'll receive a fact sheet to read that tells you about the specific COVID-19 vaccine you are being offered. If you choose to get vaccinated, you will also get a vaccination record card. After getting vaccinated, expect that you may have some side effects. (See "*What about side effects?*" below.) You should also enroll in v-safe to help you report how you're feeling after vaccination, and to get reminders about your important second dose. (See "*What is v-safe?*" below.) Even after you are vaccinated, it's still important to use protective measures to prevent infection with the virus that causes COVID-19.

## How many doses of COVID-19 vaccine will I need?

Nearly all COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S. require two doses. The first shot starts building protection, but a second dose is needed to get the best protection the vaccine can offer. After you get both doses of COVID-19 vaccine, it takes your body about 2 weeks to build immunity. It is possible you could catch COVID-19 disease before your body has built immunity from the vaccine.

## How effective are COVID-19 vaccines?

Early data suggests the vaccines are highly effective at protecting against COVID-19. Experts continue to conduct more studies about the effect of COVID-19 vaccination on the severity of illness from COVID-19, as well its effect on spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. Learn more about [COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness](#) and [types of COVID-19 vaccines](#).

## How do we know if COVID-19 vaccines are safe?

COVID-19 vaccines were tested in large clinical trials to make sure they meet safety standards. No safety step was skipped. Every COVID-19 vaccine went through the same careful and detailed stages of testing in people that other vaccines do: Phase 1 (small group of volunteers), Phase 2 (hundreds of volunteers), and Phase 3 (tens of thousands of volunteers and a placebo group). Volunteers in these trials were chosen to include people of different ages, races, and ethnicities, as well as those with pre-existing medical conditions, to see how the vaccines protect a variety of people.

COVID-19 vaccines will be given only after their safety has been carefully reviewed and approved by scientific and regulatory agencies and committees that are independent from the vaccine companies. These include the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), and a panel of top health experts in California, known as the Scientific Safety Review Workgroup. After a vaccine is authorized or approved for use, there are many vaccine safety systems in place that will watch for possible problems and recognize them rapidly. If a safety issue is detected, experts act right away to understand if the issue is related to the COVID-19 vaccine and determine the best course of action. Learn more about [COVID-19 vaccine safety](#).

## What about side effects?

Most people do not have serious problems after being vaccinated. However, your arm may be sore, red, or warm to the touch. People also report fever, chills, tiredness, or headache after getting vaccinated. These symptoms usually go away in a couple of days and are a sign that your immune system is doing exactly what it is supposed to do. It is working and building up protection to disease. Learn more about [what to expect after vaccination](#).

## **What is V-safe?**

V-safe is a new smartphone-based, after-vaccination health checker for people who get COVID-19 vaccines. V-safe uses text messaging and web surveys from CDC to check in with vaccine recipients following COVID-19 vaccination. V-safe can also give second dose reminders, and telephone follow up to anyone who reports serious adverse events. Learn more about [v-safe](#).

## **What about allergic reactions?**

There have been a few reports of allergic (anaphylactic) reactions to the vaccine. These reactions are very rare. If you have allergies to things such as food, dander, dust, grass, latex, or oral medications, there are currently no concerns with getting COVID-19 vaccine. If you have a history of severe allergic reaction (such as anaphylaxis) to any vaccine or injectable therapy, talk to your provider before getting vaccinated.

## **What if I already had COVID-19?**

There is not enough information available yet to say if, or for how long after infection, someone is protected from getting COVID-19 again. More studies are needed to better understand this. If you know you have had COVID-19 or you think you may have had COVID-19, you do not need to get any testing prior to vaccination. If you have COVID-19 right now, you should wait to be vaccinated until your isolation period is over.

## **Will I still need to use PPE after being vaccinated?**

Vaccination adds extra and very important protection against COVID-19, but you still need to wear PPE. While the COVID-19 vaccines are shown to be over 90% effective against COVID-19 disease, they still are not 100% effective. More research is needed to know how well the vaccine protects against spreading the virus to others. All staff will continue to follow facility infection prevention and control practices such as physical distancing, hand washing, and use of personal protective equipment (PPE) including masks. Together, these strategies along with COVID-19 vaccination offer the best protection from getting and spreading COVID-19.

## **Can the COVID-19 vaccine give me COVID-19 disease?**

No. COVID-19 vaccine will not give you COVID-19 disease. If you feel ill after getting vaccinated, that is because your immune system is doing exactly what it is supposed to be doing: responding to the vaccine and creating your body's immune response. Also remember that you will need 2 doses for best protection.

## **Could I test positive for COVID-19 after getting vaccinated?**

No. None of the COVID-19 vaccines being tested in the U.S. will cause you to test positive on a COVID-19 viral test, which checks to see if you have a current infection.

## **Will I have a choice about which brand of COVID-19 vaccine I get?**

It is unlikely that recipients will be able to choose vaccine brand in the first stages of COVID-19 vaccination, due to limited supply. To date, the effectiveness of the available vaccines is very similar.

## **What is an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA)?**

In order to get COVID-19 vaccines to the public as quickly as possible, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) may use what's called an [Emergency Use Authorization](#) (EUA). This allows a medical product, such as COVID-19 vaccine, to be used in emergency situations. Safety data must still demonstrate that the benefit greatly outweighs any potential risk. We've also seen EUAs used for COVID-19 tests and treatments during the pandemic.

## Can pregnant or breastfeeding women be vaccinated against COVID-19?

Yes, you may be vaccinated. Pregnant women have a higher risk for complications from COVID-19 disease. There are no study results available yet on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in pregnant women. However, experts believe that the vaccines are unlikely to pose a risk to the woman or the fetus. Pregnant women can talk with a doctor about their risk of COVID-19 disease and how they might benefit from vaccination.

Please see the following resources for more information:

- [CDC's webpage on COVID-19 vaccines](#)
- [Answering Your Questions About the New COVID-19 Vaccines](#)
- [Three Reasons Why You Were Given Top Priority To Be Vaccinated Against COVID-19](#)
- [Why Get Vaccinated? To Protect Yourself, Your Coworkers, Your Patients, Your Family](#)