



## COVID-19 Vaccines – Frequently Asked Questions

### **Are COVID-19 vaccines safe?**

COVID-19 vaccines were tested in large clinical trials to make sure they meet safety standards. Many people were recruited to participate in these trials to see how the vaccines offer protection to people of different ages, races, and ethnicities, as well as those with different medical conditions. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) carefully reviews all safety data from clinical trials and authorizes emergency vaccine use only when the expected benefits outweigh potential risks. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) reviews all safety data before recommending any COVID-19 vaccine for use. FDA and CDC will continue to monitor the safety of the vaccines to make sure even very rare side effects are identified.

### **Does the COVID-19 vaccine cause a reaction?**

Most people do not have serious problems after being vaccinated. However, your arm may be sore, red, or warm to the touch. Some people report getting a headache or fever when getting a vaccine. These are signs that your immune system is doing exactly what it is supposed to do—building up protection to the disease. These symptoms usually go away on their own within a week.

To reduce discomfort where you got the shot, apply a clean, cool, wet washcloth over the area and use or exercise your arm. To reduce discomfort from fever, drink plenty of fluids and dress lightly. Contact your healthcare provider if the redness or tenderness where you got the shot increases after 24 hours or if any effects are worrying you or do not seem to be going away after a few days.

### **Is it possible to get COVID-19 from the vaccine?**

None of the COVID-19 vaccines currently in use in the U.S. use the live virus that causes COVID-19. The goal of vaccines is to teach our immune systems how to recognize and fight the virus. It typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination, and some vaccines require two doses. That means it is possible that a person could be infected with the virus just before, or just after, getting the vaccination and become sick, since it takes the vaccine time to provide protection.

### **Will the vaccine cause you to test positive for COVID-19?**

Vaccines currently in use in the U.S. won't cause you to test positive on viral tests, which are used to see if you have a current infection. If your body develops an immune response, which is the goal of vaccination, there is a possibility you may test positive on some antibody tests. Antibody tests indicate that you had a previous infection and that you may have some level of protection against the virus. Experts are currently looking at how COVID-19 vaccination may affect antibody testing results.

### **Does getting COVID-19 give you more immunity than a vaccine?**

The protection someone gains from having an infection (natural immunity) varies depending on the disease, and from person to person. Since this virus is new, we don't know how long natural immunity might last. Some early evidence seems to suggest that it may not last very long. Regarding vaccination, we won't know how long immunity lasts until we have more data on how well it works. Both natural immunity and vaccine-induced immunity are important aspects of COVID-19 that experts are learning more about, and CDC will keep us informed as new evidence becomes available.

### **How many doses of the COVID-19 vaccine will be needed?**

The two vaccines that have received emergency use authorization each require two doses. Ohioans who receive a dose of a particular vaccine must receive a second dose of the vaccine from the same manufacturer.

If you receive a first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, your second dose *must* be the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

If you receive a first dose of the Moderna vaccine, your second dose *must* be the Moderna vaccine.

### **Will there be enough doses for everyone to get a vaccine?**

Initially, there will be a limited supply. This means that not everyone will be able to be vaccinated right away, but as vaccination production ramps up, every Ohioan who chooses to do so may receive a vaccine as soon as large quantities are available.

### **Will Ohio make COVID-19 vaccination mandatory?**

No.

### **Who will get the vaccine first?**

Initially, there will be a limited number of vaccines available. In conjunction with the recommendations of medical experts at the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), Ohio has identified who will be among the first to receive the vaccine in Phase 1A, should they choose to be vaccinated, as listed below.

- ⇒ Healthcare providers and personnel who are routinely involved with the care of COVID-19 patients.
- ⇒ Residents and staff at nursing facilities.
- ⇒ Residents and staff at assisted living facilities.
- ⇒ Patients and staff at psychiatric hospitals.
- ⇒ People with intellectual disabilities and those with mental illness who live in group homes or centers, and staff at those locations.
- ⇒ Residents and staff of Ohio's veterans' homes.
- ⇒ EMS responders.

### **If I am eligible in Phase 1A, how will I know when I can get the vaccine?**

During Phase 1A, the following providers will be responsible for distributing vaccines to the following groups:

- ⇒ Essential workers in healthcare settings – hospitals and health systems.
- ⇒ Long-term care/nursing home residents and staff – CVS and Walgreens.
- ⇒ Congregate care staff and residents, EMS first responders, any remaining long-term care facility staff – local health departments.

### **I am not in one of the first groups. When can I get the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Initially, there will be a limited number of vaccines available. We are committed to making it widely available, for those who want it, as quickly as possible. Ohio continues to make plans for a way to distribute vaccines in a way that is fair, ethical, and transparent, in conjunction with the recommendations of medical experts at the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM). As more information becomes available on who can receive the vaccine and when, we will communicate this information publicly through the news media and share information at [coronavirus.ohio.gov/vaccine](https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/vaccine).

### **Will I have to pay for the vaccine?**

The Federal government is committed to providing free or low-cost COVID-19 vaccines. Vaccines purchased with taxpayer dollars will be given to Ohioans who choose to receive them at no cost.

### **Can other vaccines help prevent me from getting COVID-19?**

Other vaccines, such as those for flu, measles, or other diseases, will not protect you from COVID-19. Only the vaccines designed specifically to protect you from COVID-19 can prevent COVID-19. While a flu vaccine will not prevent you from getting COVID-19, it can prevent you from getting influenza (flu) at the same time. Because the flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 are both spreading during this time, getting a flu vaccine is more crucial than ever.

### **Do I need to get the vaccine if I have already had COVID-19?**

Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that re-infection with COVID-19 is possible, people may be advised to get a vaccine even if they have been sick with COVID-19 before. At this time, experts do not know how long someone is protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. The immunity someone gains from having an infection, called natural immunity, varies from person to person. Some early evidence suggests natural immunity may not last very long. We won't know how long immunity produced by vaccination lasts until we have more data on how well it works. Both natural immunity and vaccine-induced immunity are important aspects of COVID-19 that experts are trying to learn more about, and CDC will keep the public informed as new evidence becomes available.

**Do I need to wear a mask and practice social distancing after I get the vaccine?**

Yes. While experts learn more about the protection COVID-19 vaccines provide under real-life conditions, it will be important for everyone to continue using all the tools available to help stop this pandemic, like wearing a mask, washing hands often, and staying at least six feet away from others. Together, COVID-19 vaccination and following CDC's recommendations for protecting yourself and others will offer the best protection from getting and spreading COVID-19. Experts need to understand more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide before changing recommendations on steps everyone should take to slow the spread of the virus.

**Sources**

- ❑ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>
- ❑ <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/hcp/answering-questions.html>
- ❑ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/vaccine-benefits/facts.html>
- ❑ [coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/resources/general-resources/frequently-asked-questions+covid-19-vaccine](https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/resources/general-resources/frequently-asked-questions+covid-19-vaccine)