

## **COVID-19 VACCINE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **1. HOW DOES THE VACCINE WORK?**

Not all COVID-19 vaccines are the same. Pfizer will be the first to be distributed and requires ultra-cold storage.

Both Pfizer and Moderna vaccines use a new technology known as mRNA, which introduces a genetic code into the body. The body uses that code to make a viral protein that activates the immune system response to fight off the coronavirus.

Recipients need to receive two shots spaced several weeks apart for full protection.

### **2. WILL THE VACCINE GIVE ME COVID-19?**

No, the Pfizer BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine does not use the live virus that causes COVID-19. The goal of the vaccine is to teach the immune system how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19. Sometimes this process can cause symptoms, such as fever. These symptoms are normal and are a sign that the body is building immunity.

### **3. WHAT ARE THE INGREDIENTS OF THE PFIZER/ BIONTECH AND MODERNA VACCINE?**

For more information on the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine visit [www.cvdvaccine.com](http://www.cvdvaccine.com)

For more information on the Moderna vaccine visit [www.modernatx.com/covid19vaccine-eua](http://www.modernatx.com/covid19vaccine-eua)

### **4. IF I HAVE ALLERGIES, SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?**

People with severe allergies who have experienced anaphylaxis in the past should talk to their doctor or medical practitioner about how to safely get the vaccine and what precautions to take.

### **5. HOW WILL GETTING VACCINATED HELP ACHIEVE HERD IMMUNITY?**

Herd immunity occurs when a critical mass of people becomes immune to the virus that causes COVID-19. The chain of transmission is halted, providing indirect protection to those who are not immune. It would take 4-5 years to reach natural herd immunity. With vaccinations, we get there much sooner.

### **6. IF I HAD COVID-19, SHOULD I GET THE VACCINE?**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says more research is needed to fully understand how long a COVID-19 survivor is protected from getting the disease again.

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Despite the uncertainties, the CDC advises survivors should get vaccinated because of the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that re-infection with COVID-19 is possible, although rare.

## **7. IF I HAVE AN UNDERLYING HEALTH CONDITION, CAN I GET THE VACCINE?**

There is currently no data that suggests having an underlying health condition is a reason to avoid getting the vaccine. In fact, those with an underlying illness or health condition are at an increased risk of developing severe side effects or hospitalization due to COVID. If you have any condition which weakens your immune system, you may not have protection against COVID-19 infection. If you are immunocompromised or are on immunosuppressive medication, or a transplant recipient, you should address your individual concerns with your doctor or medical practitioner.

## **8. IF I HAVE COVID-19 ANTIBODIES, SHOULD I GET THE VACCINE?**

When you catch COVID, your body makes antibodies that find and destroy the coronavirus in your system. That means you will have COVID-19 antibodies after infection. At least in the short term, these antibodies will protect you from catching it again. They will also keep you from spreading the virus to others. But those antibody levels decrease over time. For some people, they might drop so low they'll stop being helpful. This seems to be particularly true in people who had very mild cases of COVID, or had no symptoms at all. There has been a great deal of discussion about research that shows immunity fading quickly in some people who have recovered from COVID-19. If your immunity fades, you could be at risk for catching COVID-19 a second time. And there've been a number of reports of people getting COVID again. In some cases, the second infection was worse than the first one.

## **9. WHEN CAN I GET THE VACCINE?**

The CDC advisory panel has recommended vaccine distribution in the following phases. The actual distributions may vary since state Governors have been given authority to set priorities based on high risk groups in their state.

**Phase 1:** Frontline healthcare workers and employees, and residents of long-term facilities.

**Phase 1b:** Essential workers and everyone over 65. Essential workers include emergency responders, police officers, grocery workers, teachers and other school employees, corrections officers, public transit workers, and others whose jobs make it hard or impossible to work from home.

**Phase 2:** More supply will be available and more providers will be involved to expand distribution to the broader population.

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**Phase 3:** There will be enough supply to meet demand, and distribution will be integrated into routine vaccine programs.

## **10. HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE THE VACCINE?**

New York State has launched a new “Am I Eligible” app to help residents determine when they are eligible for the vaccine. If you are eligible, the app will connect you with where you can get the vaccine and allow you to schedule an appointment.

To see if you are eligible visit <https://am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/>

## **11. CAN I PRE-REGISTER TO RECEIVE THE VACCINE?**

New Jersey has developed a web portal that allows residents to sign up to receive the vaccine. Pre-registering to receive the vaccine makes it easier to get an appointment as vaccine administration moves through the various phases. You can pre-register even if you are not eligible to receive the vaccine at this time.

To pre-register visit <https://covid19.nj.gov/pages/vaccine>

## **12. WHERE CAN I GET THE VACCINE?**

Visit <https://vaccinefinder.nyc.gov/> to locate provider locations administering the COVID-19 vaccine and to make an appointment.

## **13. IS THE VACCINE COVERED BY MY LOCAL 342 MEDICAL PLAN?**

All Local 342 health and welfare major medical plans cover the cost of the COVID-19 vaccine.

If you are currently enrolled in the Local 342 Health Care Fund **Platinum, Gold, Silver, or Bronze Plan** you are fully covered for the vaccine. \*co-pay may apply.

If you are currently enrolled in the Local 342 Welfare Fund **I, K, 3F, J, L(retiree), Gold and Silver** you are fully covered for the vaccine.\*co-pays may apply.

If you are in the Local 342 Health Care or Welfare Fund ancillary benefits, contact the Member Service Department regarding vaccine coverage options.

## **14. HOW MANY SHOTS OF COVID-19 VACCINE WILL BE NEEDED?**

The currently approved Pfizer and Moderna vaccine requires two doses given two to three weeks apart for the vaccine to reach its 90% - 95% efficacy.

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## **15. HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE FOR THE VACCINE TO WORK?**

You won't get the full protection from the vaccine until about a week after the second dose, based on clinical trial data.

## **16. WILL I NEED A BOOSTER SHOT?**

Some of the vaccines further down the pipeline are single shots, but the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines require two doses to hit the 95% effectiveness level. Additional boosters may be necessary in upcoming years — the current vaccines have been tested only over a period of six months, and it is possible immunity could wane.

## **17. WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 VACCINE?**

Some mild to moderate side effects are common — mostly swelling, pain, redness at the injection site, fatigue and sometimes including fever, chills, and headache that resolves within about 24 hours.

## **18. HOW DO I REPORT IT IF I HAVE A PROBLEM OR BAD REACTION AFTER GETTING THE COVID-19 VACCINE?**

It is recommended that you follow the instructions provided by the doctor or pharmacist that administers your vaccine.

CDC has also implemented a new smartphone-based tool called v-safe to check-in on people's health after they receive a COVID-19 vaccine. When you receive your vaccine, you should also receive a v-safe information sheet telling you how to enroll in v-safe. If you enroll, you will receive regular text messages directing you to surveys where you can report any problems or adverse reactions you have after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine.

## **19. IF I HAVE SIDE EFFECTS AFTER RECEIVING THE VACCINE, AM I CONTAGIOUS TO THOSE AROUND ME?**

If you have side effects after vaccination, this does not mean you are in any way contagious to your family or community. You cannot develop COVID-19 from the vaccine.

You should continue to follow all safety measures like mask-wearing, handwashing, physical distancing etc., just as you have been doing.

## **20. CAN A VACCINATED PERSON WHO COMES INTO CONTACT WITH COVID-19 STILL BE A SPREADER OF THE VIRUS?**

The coronavirus vaccines are injected deep into the muscles and stimulate the immune system to produce antibodies. This appears to be enough protection to keep the vaccinated person from

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getting ill. But what's not clear is whether it's possible for the virus to bloom in the nose — and be sneezed or breathed out to infect others.

## **21. AFTER I GET VACCINATED DO I STILL HAVE TO WEAR A MASK?**

Until the population is broadly vaccinated and the outbreak under control, which will take many months, everyone vaccinated or not needs to continue to wear masks and practice distancing to protect themselves and others.

## **22. IF I GET VACCINATED, CAN I GO BACK TO LIFE AS NORMAL?**

No, not right away. Studies of the new vaccines only measured whether vaccinated people developed symptoms, not whether they got infected. It's possible that they got light infections not enough to make them ill, but enough to pass the virus on to others. The CDC is calling for those who are immunized to continue wearing masks and practicing safe physical distancing until more is learned.

## **23. IF I'M PREGNANT OR OF CHILD-BEARING AGE, IS IT SAFE FOR ME TO GET THE VACCINE?**

Pregnant and breastfeeding women have been excluded from the leading vaccine clinical trials so far, including those from Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna, Janssen, AstraZeneca and Novavax.

This is not unusual as vaccine clinical trials typically don't enroll participants who are pregnant or lactating until the vaccine has been shown to be safely tolerated in people who are not pregnant.

There are current studies on the COVID vaccine in which pregnant women are part of the study pool. We should have that data in the coming year.

## **24. IF I'M BREASTFEEDING, CAN I STILL GET THE VACCINE?**

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices states that breastfeeding women may receive the vaccine. It is not known if the COVID-19 mRNA vaccine is passed through breast milk. Even if the mRNA is in the breast milk, there is no known harm to feeding an infant. It is also important to remember that live viral vaccines measles, mumps and rubella vaccine are routinely given to lactating women. But keep in mind that the COVID vaccine does not contain any live virus.

## **25. WHEN WILL VACCINES BE AVAILABLE FOR CHILDREN?**

The current minimum age requirement for the Moderna vaccine is 18 and older and 16 and older for the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine.

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So far, no coronavirus vaccine has been approved for children under the age of 16. New vaccines are typically tested on adults before researchers conduct clinical trials on children, and coronavirus vaccine developers are following this protocol. Pfizer and BioNTech and Moderna are currently studying their vaccine on children as young as 12. If the result of these trials yield good results, the companies will expand the trials to younger children. The FDA will then have to review these results before the vaccines can get emergency authorization.

## **26. WILL MY PERSONAL INFORMATION REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL FROM NON-HEALTH AGENCIES IF I RECEIVE THE VACCINE?**

Yes, The CDC has agreed to amend the terms of the data use agreement for New York State. According to Governor Cuomo's website [www.governor.ny.gov](http://www.governor.ny.gov) "New York will not transmit any data that could be used to identify the immigration status of any individual. This includes, but is not limited to, name and address. The CDC also agreed that use and access to any data shared from New York will not be shared with any other agency or entity for purposes not related to public health".

### Sources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/vaccine-benefits/facts.html>

Henry Ford Health Systems: <https://www.henryford.com/coronavirus/vaccine-faqs>

Pfizer-BioNTech: <https://www.cvdvaccine-us.com/images/pdf/fact-sheet-for-recipients-and-caregivers.pdf>

New York State: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/video-audio-rush-transcript-governor-cuomo-announces-federal-government-has-agreed-not-collect>

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