

COVID-19 Vaccine Information: Answers to Important Questions!

UCLA

Pfizer & Moderna

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Why should I get vaccinated?

- Vaccination protects you, your family, and your community from any symptomatic COVID-19.
- Reduces the chance of hospitalization and death.
- Being unvaccinated may increase your risk of COVID-19 and serious long-term complications.

How does the vaccine work?

The vaccine teaches your body how to recognize and respond to COVID-19.

Side effects

- Most side effects are mild, may occur over a few days, and can be stronger after your 2nd dose. Common side effects include pain or muscle ache, fatigue, headache, nausea, chills, and fever. After vaccination, medical personnel will monitor you for 15 minutes to ensure you get any necessary treatment if you have a reaction.
- Serious side effects are rare. The vaccine is safe for you if you have seasonal, pet, or food allergies. If you have a history of anaphylaxis (severe allergic reactions), previous vaccine reactions, are allergic to polysorbate or ethylene glycol, talk to your doctor. There is no evidence the vaccine affects fertility.
- Talk to your doctor if you: are immunocompromised or are taking medication that affects your immune system, have been unable to receive vaccinations in the past because of a blood thinner or a bleeding disorder, have a fever, are pregnant, or plan to become pregnant.

Is the vaccine safe for someone like me?

Over 70,000 people participated in Pfizer and Moderna trials and were equally safe for all:

- Adults, all ages (65+, over 85% effective)
- Race/ethnicities (Black, Latino, other communities of color, over 95% effective)
- Chronic conditions (about 90% effective)

Even if you had COVID-19 already, the vaccine is safe and can prolong your immunity.

How many people from racial and ethnic groups were part of the clinical trials?

Moderna and Pfizer clinical trials included a broad range of diverse participants: American Indian (0.8%, 0.6%), Asian (4.7%, 4.4%), Black (9.7%, 9.8%), Hispanic/Latino (20.5%, 26.2%), Multiracial (2.1%, 2.5%) and Pacific Islander (0.2%, 0.2%), respectively.

What is in the vaccine?

Four ingredients: Protein (mRNA), fats (called lipids), salt, and sugar (preservatives). No animal products (halal) or thimerosal. No fetal tissue was used to make the vaccine. These vaccines do not contain any parts of the coronavirus and cannot cause COVID-19.

How was the vaccine tested? Was it rushed?

Quickly but carefully and safely! There was no “skipping” of testing steps. Testing and production overlapped to reduce time. These types of vaccines have been studied for years before COVID-19. The vaccines were found to work very well and be equally safe for 70,000 people in the Pfizer and Moderna trials. As of January 2021, over 10 million in the US have received the vaccine.

Which vaccine is better? Do I have a choice?

- Both Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are about 95% effective.
- At this point, due to limited supply, you cannot choose. Your first shot needs to be the same as your second shot. Pfizer is the only vaccine approved for ages 16-17 years of age. Pfizer and Moderna each have two doses, spaced apart 3-4 weeks.

Is the vaccine required?

Not currently, but you are strongly encouraged to get the vaccine. Postponing vaccination can increase your risk of COVID-19 and long-term complications.

Should I get the vaccine if I already had COVID-19?

Yes. Protection from the vaccine is safe and can prolong your immunity. You can wait up to 90 days after infection for vaccination but can receive it as soon as local regulations allow.

Do I still need to wear a mask after getting the vaccine?

Yes. The vaccines protect YOU from getting sick from COVID-19, but it is unclear whether you may still get mild or symptom-free cases, then transmit COVID-19 to others. Continue to follow public health guidelines, such as wearing a mask, social distancing, and avoiding indoor crowds.

How do I find out where to get the vaccine? Is it free?

Visit your local county department of public health website or talk to your provider for information on eligibility and where to get the vaccine.

The vaccine is free. In some cases, you may provide insurance or a facility fee.

Why are some communities, such as Black, Latinx, American Indians, Pacific Islanders, or Asian Americans, being encouraged to get the vaccine?

Some communities may be offered the vaccines earlier than others because their infection, hospitalization, and death rates have been disproportionately high due to occupational risk as essential workers, insufficient medical access, etc.

Other questions or concerns?

Your questions are important and deserve to be answered by knowledgeable and trusted individuals. Contact your physician or local public health department for more questions.

Updated versions of this document will be published on stopcovid-19ca.org

References:

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