



# Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccination

Updated Oct. 13, 2022


Below are answers to commonly asked questions about COVID-19 vaccination.

**Have more questions?** Visit [How to Protect Yourself and Others](#).

## Boosters

### Do I need a COVID-19 vaccine booster?



Yes. [Recent data](#)  suggest COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness at preventing infection or severe illness wanes over time, especially for certain groups of people, such as people ages 65 years and older and people with immunocompromise.

The emergence of [COVID-19 variants](#) further emphasizes the importance of vaccination, boosters, and prevention efforts needed to protect against COVID-19.


Data show that an mRNA booster increases the immune response, which improves protection against getting a serious COVID-19 infection.

**CDC recommends COVID-19 vaccines for everyone ages 6 months and older, and boosters for everyone 5 years and older, if eligible.**

Learn more about [COVID-19 vaccine recommendations](#), including [recommendations for people who are moderately or severely immunocompromised](#). Use [CDC's COVID-19 Booster Tool](#) to learn if and when you can get boosters to stay up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines.

### If we need a booster, are the vaccines working?



Yes. [COVID-19 vaccines are working well](#) to prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death. However, public health experts are seeing [reduced protection over time](#)  against mild and moderate disease, especially among certain populations.

### Do boosters use the same ingredients as existing vaccines?



Yes. COVID-19 boosters are the same ingredients (formulation) as the current COVID-19 vaccines.

## What are the risks to getting a booster?

Adults and children may have [some side effects](#) from a COVID-19 vaccine, including pain, redness or swelling at the injection site, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, fever, and nausea. [Serious side effects are rare](#), but may occur.

## Am I still considered “fully vaccinated” if I don’t get a booster?

Yes, you are fully vaccinated even if you haven’t gotten your booster yet. The definition of fully vaccinated does not include a COVID-19 booster. Fully vaccinated, however, is not the same as having the best protection. People are best protected when they [stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations](#), **which includes getting a booster when eligible**.

## Does the definition of “up to date” include boosters?

Yes. You are up to date if you have completed a COVID-19 vaccine primary series and received the most recent booster dose recommended for you by CDC.

## If I have received a J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine and a J&J/Janssen COVID-19 booster, are additional boosters recommended?

People (except those who are [moderately or severely immunocompromised](#)) who first received a J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine and got it again for their booster may also receive a booster of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna). Get the mRNA booster at least 4 months after the most recent J&J/Janssen booster.

- One CDC study found that adults who received the J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine as both their primary and booster had lower levels of protection against COVID-19-associated emergency department and urgent care visits during Omicron compared to adults who received an mRNA COVID-19 booster.

Use [CDC’s COVID-19 Booster Tool](#) to learn if and when you can get boosters to stay up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines.

# Getting Your Vaccine

## Am I required to get vaccinated for work?

An employer may require that their workers be vaccinated. **Check directly with your employer** to see if they have any vaccination requirements or rules that apply to you.

## How many doses of COVID-19 vaccine will I need to get to complete my primary series?

The number of vaccine doses you need to complete your primary series depends on which vaccine you receive.

- 2 doses of [Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine](#) 3–8\* weeks apart for people 5 years and older, or
- 3 doses of [Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine](#) for ages 6 months through 4 years, first and second dose 3-8 weeks apart, second and third dose at least 8 weeks apart\*.
- 2 doses of [Moderna vaccine](#) 4–8\* weeks apart for people ages 6 months and older.
- 2 doses of [Novavax vaccine](#) 3–8\* weeks apart for people ages 12 years and older.

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- 1 dose of Johnson & Johnson's Janssen ([J&J/Janssen](#)) vaccine for people ages 18 and older.

\*Talk to your healthcare or vaccine provider about the timing for the second dose in your primary series. You should **not** get the second dose early.

People who are **moderately or severely immunocompromised** may have a different immune response following COVID-19 vaccination. Please see specific [COVID-19 vaccination guidance for people who are moderately or severely immunocompromised](#).

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### If I didn't get my second dose of a 2-dose COVID-19 vaccine within the recommended time, do I need to start over?

No. If you receive your second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine at any time after the recommended date, you do not have to restart the vaccine series. This guidance might be updated as more information becomes available.

Learn more about [staying up to date](#) with your COVID-19 vaccines.

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### Can I ask my healthcare provider for a dose of COVID-19 vaccine that does not follow vaccination guidelines, sometimes called "off-label" use?

Your provider cannot give you a dose of vaccine that does not follow its specific vaccine product guidelines and requirements. All COVID-19 vaccine providers in the United States must be enrolled in the [CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Program](#). To participate in this program, vaccine providers sign an [agreement](#) that states they will only administer COVID-19 vaccines in accordance with program requirements and recommendations including those of [CDC](#), the [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices](#) (ACIP), and the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#)  (FDA). Your provider can refer to the CDC [Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of COVID-19 Vaccines in the United States](#) for specific information on administration of COVID-19 vaccines. These guidelines are based on safety and efficacy data and are updated as new information becomes available.

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### How long does protection from a COVID-19 vaccine last?

Scientists are monitoring how long COVID-19 vaccine protection lasts. [COVID-19 vaccines work well](#) to prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death. However, public health experts are seeing decreases in the protection COVID-19 vaccines provide over time, especially for certain groups of people. Due to this, CDC recommends COVID-19 vaccines for everyone ages 6 months and older, and boosters for everyone 5 years and older, if eligible. Learn more about [COVID-19 booster recommendations](#), including [recommendations for people who are moderately or severely immunocompromised](#).

CDC continues to review evidence and updates guidance as new information becomes available.

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### Do COVID-19 vaccines affect your menstrual cycle (period)?

Results from recent research studies show that people who menstruate **may observe small, temporary changes in menstruation** after COVID-19 vaccination, including:

- Longer duration of menstrual periods
- Shorter intervals between periods
- Heavier bleeding than usual

Despite these temporary changes in menstruation, there is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines cause fertility problems.

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Learn more about [COVID-19 vaccination for people who would like to have a baby](#).

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## Getting Children and Teens Vaccinated

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[Should parents and caregivers wait for updated or additional vaccines, if a child is low risk for infection?](#) 

Parents and caregivers should get their child vaccinated as soon as vaccines are available to them. Getting vaccinated provides the best protection against serious illness if a child gets infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. Since there is no way to tell in advance how children, who are not moderately or severely immunocompromised, or those who may be immunocompromised. A child can be immunocompromised and still healthy, will be affected by COVID-19 it's important to get them vaccinated as soon as possible to protect them against severe illness. **To find your child a COVID-19 vaccine or booster near you:** Search [vaccines.gov](#), text your ZIP code to 438829, or call 1-800-232-0233.

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[Does a parent or guardian have to give consent before a child or teen can receive a COVID-19 vaccine?](#) 

There is no federal legal requirement for a parent, guardian, or caregiver to consent for COVID-19 or any other vaccination. However, depending on each state or local law, this does not mean that consent is not required for select age groups. State or local laws and policies, as well as vaccine provider policies, around minor consent for vaccination have existed for a long time and will also apply to COVID-19 vaccination of children.

For information on caregiver consent on COVID-19 vaccination for youth experiencing homelessness, visit [COVID-19 Vaccination for People Experiencing Homelessness: Frequently Asked Questions](#).

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[Can children and teens get COVID-19 from a COVID-19 vaccine?](#) 

No. [COVID-19 vaccines](#) that are currently available do not use the live virus that causes COVID-19. These vaccines work by using a **harmless** piece of spike protein from the virus causing COVID-19 to teach the body how to fight the virus that causes it. The body then gets rid of the harmless spike protein within a few days after vaccination.

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[Are the COVID-19 vaccines for children the same ones that are given to adults?](#) 

The COVID-19 vaccines for children have the same active ingredients as the vaccines given to adults. However, children receive a smaller and more age-appropriate dose that is right for them. The smaller doses were rigorously tested and found to create the needed immune response for each age group. Making it important for our child to get the vaccine made for their age group.

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## Safety

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[Are COVID-19 vaccines safe even though the vaccines were developed rapidly?](#) 

Although COVID-19 vaccines were developed quickly, research and development on vaccines like these have been underway for decades. All vaccine development steps were taken to ensure COVID-19 vaccine safety and effectiveness,

including:

- **Clinical Trials** – All vaccines in the United States must go through [three phases of clinical trials](#) to ensure they are [safe and effective](#). The phases overlapped to speed up the process, but all phases were completed.
- **Authorization or Approval** – Before vaccines are available to people, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reviews data from clinical trials. FDA has determined [COVID-19 vaccines](#) meet FDA's standards and has granted those vaccines [Emergency Use Authorizations \(EUAs\)](#) [↗](#) or full FDA approval.
- **Tracking Safety Using Vaccine Monitoring Systems** – Like every other vaccine approved for use in the United States, COVID-19 vaccines continue to be monitored for safety and effectiveness. Hundreds of millions of people in the United States have safely received COVID-19 vaccines. CDC and FDA continue to provide updated information on the safety of U.S. authorized or approved COVID-19 vaccines using data from several [monitoring systems](#).

Learn more about [developing COVID-19 vaccines](#).

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## What are the ingredients in COVID-19 vaccines?

Vaccine ingredients vary by manufacturer. None of the vaccines contain eggs, gelatin, latex, or preservatives. All COVID-19 vaccines are **free from metals**, such as iron, nickel, cobalt, lithium, and rare earth alloys. They are also free from manufactured products such as microelectronics, electrodes, carbon nanotubes, and nanowire semiconductors. **None** of the COVID-19 vaccines authorized or approved in the United States contain any live virus.

To learn more about the ingredients in authorized or approved COVID-19 vaccines, see

- [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine Overview and Safety](#)
- [Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine Overview and Safety](#)
- [Johnson & Johnson's Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine Overview and Safety](#)
- [Novavax COVID-19 Vaccine Overview and Safety](#)
- [Ingredients Included in COVID-19 Vaccines](#)

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## If I am pregnant or planning to become pregnant, can I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for [people who are pregnant](#), breastfeeding, or trying to get pregnant now, as well as people who [might become pregnant in the future](#). People with COVID-19 during pregnancy are more likely to deliver a [preterm](#) (earlier than 37 weeks) or stillborn infant and may also be more likely to have other pregnancy complications.

COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy helps:

- Prevent severe illness and death in [people who are pregnant](#)
- [Protect babies younger than 6 months old](#) from hospitalization caused by COVID-19

Learn more about vaccination considerations and the [safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccinations](#) for people who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

If you are pregnant and have received a COVID-19 vaccine, we encourage you to enroll in [v-safe](#), CDC's smartphone-based system that provides personalized health check-ins after vaccination. A [v-safe pregnancy registry](#) has been established to gather information on the health of pregnant people who have received a COVID-19 vaccine.

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## Why should my children and teens get vaccinated against COVID-19?



COVID-19 can make children and teens very sick and sometimes requires treatment in a hospital. Getting eligible [children and teens vaccinated against COVID-19](#) can help keep them from getting really sick if they do get COVID-19, including protecting them from short and long-term complications and hospitalization. Vaccinating children can also help keep them in school or daycare and safely participating in sports, playdates, and other group activities.

The benefits of COVID-19 vaccination outweigh the known and potential risks. CDC recommends COVID-19 vaccines for everyone ages 6 months and older, and boosters for everyone 5 years and older, if eligible.

Learn [6 Things About the COVID-19 Vaccine for Children](#).

Use [CDC's COVID-19 Booster Tool](#) to learn if and when your child or teen can get boosters to stay up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines.

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## Preparing for Your Vaccine

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### Why should I get vaccinated if I might get COVID-19 anyway?

**COVID-19 vaccination significantly lowers your risk of severe illness, hospitalization, and death if you get infected.** Compared to people who are [up to date](#) with their COVID-19 vaccinations, **unvaccinated people are more likely to get COVID-19**, much more likely to be [hospitalized with COVID-19](#), and much more likely to [die from COVID-19](#).

Like all vaccines, COVID-19 vaccines are not 100% effective at preventing infection. Some people who are up to date with their COVID-19 vaccinations will get COVID-19 [breakthrough infection](#). However, staying up to date with your COVID-19 vaccinations means that you are less likely to have a breakthrough infection and, if you do get sick, you are less likely to get severely ill or die. Staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccination also means you are less likely to spread the disease to others and increases your protection against new variants of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

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### Do I need to wait after getting a flu vaccine or another vaccine before getting a COVID-19 vaccine?

There is no recommended waiting period between getting a COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines. You can [get a COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines](#), including a [flu vaccine](#), at the same visit. Experience with other vaccines has shown that the way our bodies develop protection, known as an [immune response](#), and possible [side effects](#) after getting vaccinated are generally the same when given alone or with other vaccines.

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### If I already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

You should get a COVID-19 vaccine even if you already had COVID-19.

[Getting a COVID-19 vaccine](#) after you recover from COVID-19 infection provides added protection against COVID-19. You may consider delaying your vaccine by 3 months from when your symptoms started or, if you had no symptoms, when you received a positive test.

People who already had COVID-19 and do not get vaccinated after their recovery are [more likely to get COVID-19 again](#) than those who get vaccinated after their recovery.

Learn more about the [benefits of getting a COVID-19 vaccine](#).

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### Can I get vaccinated against COVID-19 while I am currently sick with COVID-19?

No. You should wait to be vaccinated until after you [complete your isolation period](#). People who have symptoms will end isolation at a different time than people who do not have symptoms. This also applies to people who have been vaccinated but get COVID-19 before getting any additional or booster doses. Additionally, you *may* consider delaying your next vaccine (primary dose or booster) by 3 months from when your symptoms started or, if you had no symptoms, when you received a positive test.

People who have had a known COVID-19 exposure should not seek vaccination until their [quarantine period](#) has ended to avoid potentially exposing healthcare personnel and others during the vaccination visit. This recommendation to wait also applies to people with a known COVID-19 exposure who have received their first dose and need additional or booster doses.

Learn more about how to [stay up to date](#) with your COVID-19 vaccines.

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### Can I choose which COVID-19 vaccine I get?



Yes, depending on your age, for your primary series you can choose which [type of COVID-19 vaccine](#) to get. If you are getting a COVID-19 booster, depending on your age and which type of COVID-19 vaccine you have already had, you may be able to choose which type of COVID-19 vaccine booster to get.

Learn more about which vaccine is available by age and how to [stay up to date](#) with your COVID-19 vaccination.

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## After Your Vaccine

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### How can I get a new CDC COVID-19 Vaccination card?



If you have lost your [CDC COVID-19 Vaccination card](#) or don't have a copy of it, contact your vaccination provider directly to request a new vaccination card. They may be able to reissue a CDC COVID-19 Vaccination card.

- If you cannot contact your vaccination provider directly or your vaccination provider cannot reissue a CDC COVID-19 Vaccination card, contact your state health department's [immunization information system \(IIS\)](#). Your state's IIS cannot issue you a vaccination card, but they can provide a digital or paper copy of [your full vaccination record](#), including your COVID-19 vaccinations.
- If you need another COVID-19 vaccine dose and are unable to get a copy of your vaccination card or vaccination record, talk to a vaccination provider to learn about your possible options.
- Some vaccination providers and health departments may offer you access to a QR code or digital copy of your CDC COVID-19 Vaccination card in addition to giving you a physical card. Contact your vaccination provider or [local health department](#) to learn if you can get a digital copy of your card.

CDC does **not** provide the white CDC COVID-19 Vaccination card to people and does **not** maintain vaccination records. CDC distributes the white CDC COVID-19 Vaccination cards to vaccination providers and only a vaccination provider can give you this card.

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### Do I need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others if I am vaccinated?



Generally, if you are [up to date](#) on your COVID-19 vaccinations, you do not need to wear a mask in outdoor settings. Check your local [COVID-19 Community Level](#) for recommendations on when to wear a mask indoors and additional precautions you can take to protect yourself from COVID-19. If you are immunocompromised or more likely to get very sick from COVID-19, learn more about [how to protect yourself](#).

Should I wear a mask if I have a weak immune system?



If you have a condition or are taking medications that weaken your immune system, your immune response to COVID-19 vaccination may not be as strong as in people who are not immunocompromised. Check your county's [COVID-19 Community Level](#) for recommendations on whether you should wear a mask and additional actions you can take to protect yourself from COVID-19. You may choose to wear a mask at any time based on your own level of comfort and personal risk.

Learn more about COVID-19 vaccinations for [people who are moderately or severely immunocompromised](#).

I was vaccinated in another country. How do I transfer my proof of vaccination from that country to get a proof of vaccination card in the United States?



The white CDC COVID-19 vaccination cards are only issued to people vaccinated in the United States. However, there are several ways you can update your records with vaccines you received while outside the United States. Learn more about [COVID-19 Vaccines for People Who Were Vaccinated Abroad](#).

Am I considered fully vaccinated if I was vaccinated in another country?



It depends on a number of factors. Learn more about [COVID-19 Vaccines for People Who Were Vaccinated Abroad](#).

Answers to more questions about:

- [Isolation](#)
- [Vaccines.gov](#)
- [Vaccine Administration Management System \(VAMS\)](#)
- [V-safe after Vaccination Health Checker](#)

Related Pages

- › [FAQs about Vaccination in Children](#)
- › [Myths and Facts about COVID-19 Vaccines](#)

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