COVID-19

Benefits of Getting Vaccinated

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WHAT TO KNOW

- Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 has many benefits that are supported by scientific studies.
- The COVID-19 vaccine helps protect you from severe illness, hospitalization, and death.
- CDC recommends an updated COVID-19 vaccine for most adults ages 18 years and older.
- Parents of children ages 6 months to 17 years should discuss the benefits of vaccination with a healthcare provider.

COVID-19 vaccines protect your health

COVID-19 continues to cause millions of illnesses, hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations, and tens of thousands of deaths each year in the United States.[1] [2] It was the 10th leading cause of death in 2023.[3]

COVID-19 vaccines can help keep you from getting sick from COVID-19. If you do get COVID-19, vaccines can make the illness shorter[4] [5] and less severe.

Stay up to date

Learn about the latest recommendations for the updated COVID-19 vaccine.

Stay Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines

The data below describe how well vaccines work to reduce your risk. This risk reduction is in addition to protection you may have from previous infections with COVID-19 or from receiving earlier versions of COVID-19 vaccines.

COVID-19 vaccines:

- **Reduce your risk for critical illness** (admission to intensive care unit or death)
  - For adults ages 18 and older, the 2023–2024 COVID-19 vaccines reduced the risk of critical illness from COVID-19 by almost 70% in the first 2 months after vaccination. Protection decreased over time. During the 10 months after vaccination, the vaccines reduced critical illness risk by about 50%.[6]
- **Reduce your risk of being hospitalized**
  - For adults ages 18 and older, the 2023–2024 COVID-19 vaccines reduced the risk of COVID-19 hospitalization by about 50% in the first 2 months after vaccination. Protection decreased over time. During the 10 months after vaccination, the vaccines reduced hospitalization risk by about 30%.[6] [7]
- **Reduce your risk of getting sick and needing to go to urgent care or the emergency department**
  - For adults ages 18 and older, the 2023–2024 COVID-19 vaccines reduced the risk of COVID-19 urgent care and emergency department visits by about 50% in the first 2 months after vaccination. Protection decreased over time, with little protection remaining at 4–6 months.[6] [7]
- **Reduce your risk for Long COVID**

- Studies show that people who got vaccinated against COVID-19 and later get COVID-19 are less likely to have Long COVID, compared to people who are unvaccinated or not up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines.[8] [9]

Important for people at higher risk from COVID-19

- **If you are 65 years or older**
  - The 2023–2024 COVID-19 vaccines reduced the risk of critical illness (admission to intensive care unit or death) among older adults by about 67% in the first 2 months after vaccination. During the 4–6 months after vaccination, the vaccines reduced critical illness risk by about 40%.[6]
  - The 2023–2024 COVID-19 vaccines reduced the risk of COVID-19 hospitalization among older adults by about 50% in the first 2 months after vaccination. Protection from vaccination wanes by 4–6 months after vaccination. [6] [7] Because adults ages 65 years and older have a higher risk for severe COVID-19, they are recommended to receive a second dose of COVID-19 vaccine 6 months after their first dose.
- **If you have a weakened immune system**
  - The 2023–2024 COVID-19 vaccines reduced the risk of COVID-19 hospitalization for people with a weakened immune system by about 36% in the first 2 months after vaccination. Protection from vaccination wanes by 4–6 months after vaccination.[6] [10] Because people with a weakened immune system have a higher risk for severe COVID-19, they are recommended to receive a second dose of COVID-19 vaccine 6 months after their first dose.
- **If you are pregnant**
  - Getting a COVID-19 vaccine while you are pregnant helps protect you. It also helps protect your baby from severe health outcomes due to COVID-19 before they become eligible for COVID-19 vaccination when they are 6 months old.[11]
  - COVID-19–associated hospitalization rates among infants younger than 6 months remain higher than rates among any other age group except adults ages 75 years and older.[12]
  - Maternal vaccination during pregnancy reduced the risk of COVID-19-related hospitalization by around 54% among infants during the first 3 months of life.[11]

Children

The 2023–2024 COVID-19 vaccines reduced the risk of COVID-19-associated emergency room and urgent care visits by

- Around 65% in children **ages 9 months to 4 years** in the first 2 months after vaccination. Protection decreased over time.[6]
- About 70% in children **ages 5–17 years** in the first 2 months after vaccination. Protection decreased over time. At 4–6 months after vaccination, the vaccines reduced risk by about 50%.[6]

KEEP READING
6 Things to Know about COVID-19 Vaccination for Children

Vaccination is more reliable way to build protection than getting sick

COVID-19 vaccination helps protect people by creating an immune response without the potentially severe illness that can be associated with COVID-19 infection.

What Can Happen If You Get Sick with COVID-19

- COVID-19 can cause severe illness or death, even in children, but it is not always possible to determine who will experience mild or severe illness from COVID-19 infection.
- People may have long-term health issues after having COVID-19. Even people who do not have symptoms when they are first infected with COVID-19 can experience long-term health problems, also known as Long COVID or post-COVID conditions.
- Complications can appear after mild or severe COVID-19, or after multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C).

Protection from having had COVID-19

Keep in mind

While people can get some protection from having COVID-19, the level and length of that protection varies, especially as COVID-19 variants continue to emerge.

- Immunity (protection) from infection can vary depending on how mild or severe someone's illness was, their age, and whether they have a weakened immune system. Immunity also changes depending on what variant of SARS-CoV-2 someone had and how similar it is to the variants currently circulating.
- Immunity from infection decreases over time.

A closer look at the safety data

During the COVID-19 pandemic, COVID-19 vaccines underwent the most intensive safety analysis in U.S. history. COVID-19 vaccines continue to be monitored for safety, even after FDA approval, to make sure they continue to meet FDA's standards for safety and effectiveness.

To date, the systems in place to monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines currently used in the United States have identified anaphylaxis and myocarditis or pericarditis as serious types of adverse events following COVID-19 vaccination. Other rare events, such as Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS), are also monitored for and studied.

Read more about COVID-19 vaccine safety

After vaccination

Learn what you can do after vaccination to protect your family from COVID-19 in CDC's respiratory virus guidance.

SOURCES

CONTENT SOURCE:
National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases; Coronavirus and Other Respiratory Viruses Division

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