



## COVID-19

# Key Things to Know About COVID-19 Vaccines

Updated Nov. 5, 2021

**NOTICE:** CDC now recommends that children between the ages of 5 and 11 years receive the Pfizer-BioNTech pediatric COVID-19 Vaccine. Learn more about [vaccines for children and teens](#).

## What You Need to Know

### Safety of COVID-19 Vaccine for Children 5 Years and Older

Before recommending COVID-19 vaccination for children, scientists conducted clinical trials. The FDA gave the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine emergency authorization to use in children ages 5 years through 15 years old and full approval to use in people ages 16 years and older. Learn more about the [process of developing, authorizing and approving COVID-19 vaccines](#).



- COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for everyone ages 5 years and older. [Learn how to find a COVID-19 vaccine](#).
- Widespread vaccination is a critical tool to help stop the pandemic.
- COVID-19 vaccines are effective at helping protect everyone ages 5 years and older against severe disease and death from the virus that causes COVID-19, including known [variants](#) currently circulating (e.g., Delta variant).
- [People who are fully vaccinated](#) can resume activities that you did before the pandemic. However, people should wear a mask indoors in public if they are in an [area of substantial or high transmission](#). Being fully vaccinated and wearing a mask maximizes protection against COVID-19 infection and reduces the chances of spreading it to others.
- As with other routine vaccines, [side effects](#) may occur after vaccination. These are normal and should go away within a few days.
- The [benefits of COVID-19 vaccination](#) outweigh the known and potential risks, which are rare.
- People **cannot** get COVID-19 from getting vaccinated, and there is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines cause fertility problems. Learn more about [how mRNA vaccines work](#).
- Unlike many medications, COVID-19 vaccine dosage does not vary by patient weight but by age on the day of vaccination.
- Adolescents ages 12 years and older receive the same dosage of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine as adults.
- The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for children ages 5 through 11 has the same active ingredients as the vaccine given to adults and adolescents. However, children ages 5 through 11 years cannot get the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine given to adults and adolescents. In addition, children ages 5 through 11 years receive an age-appropriate dose that is one-third of the adult dose of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. Smaller needles, designed specifically for children, are also used for children.

vaccine. Smaller needles, designed specifically for children, are also used for children ages 5 through 11 years.

- People who are [moderately to severely immunocompromised](#) are recommended to get an additional primary dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (i.e., Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna).
- Certain groups of people are recommended to get a [COVID-19 booster shot](#).
- People can get a COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines, including flu vaccine, at the same time.

[Learn more about COVID-19 vaccination for children ages 5 and older.](#)



## COVID-19 Vaccine ChatBot

Use SmartFind chat tool to find answers to common COVID-19 vaccination questions.

Get Started

## Availability of Vaccines

COVID-19 vaccines are widely accessible in the United States. Everyone ages 5 years and older should [get a COVID-19 vaccination](#) as soon as possible. COVID-19 vaccines are [available for everyone at no cost](#), regardless of their immigration or health insurance status.

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Many doctors' offices, retail pharmacies, hospitals, and clinics offer COVID-19 vaccinations. Visit [vaccines.gov](#) to find locations that are offering vaccines to everyone ages 5 years and older. Parents can check with their child's healthcare provider, their local pharmacy, and health department about whether they offer COVID-19 vaccination. [Learn more about how to find a COVID-19 vaccine.](#)

## Effectiveness

COVID-19 vaccines are effective at protecting people from COVID-19 and help keep adults and children from getting seriously sick. COVID-19 vaccines can reduce the risk of people spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. Getting everyone ages 5 years and older vaccinated can help the entire family, including siblings who are not eligible for vaccination and family members who may be at risk of getting very sick if they are infected.

Adults and children 5 years and older who are fully vaccinated can resume activities that they did before the pandemic. [Learn more about what people can do when they have been fully vaccinated.](#)

Studies show that COVID-19 vaccines are effective, especially at keeping adults and children from getting seriously ill even if they do get COVID-19. [Learn more about the benefits of getting vaccinated.](#)

COVID-19 vaccines teach our immune systems how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19. It typically takes **2 weeks after vaccination for the body to build protection** (immunity) against the virus that causes COVID-19.

People are considered fully vaccinated 2 weeks after their second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines, or 2 weeks after the single-dose Johnson & Johnson's Janssen COVID-19 vaccine. To receive the most protection, people should **receive all recommended doses** of a COVID-19 vaccine. [Learn more about who is recommended to get an additional primary dose or a booster dose.](#)

[primary dose](#) or a [booster dose](#).


People can sometimes get COVID-19 after being fully vaccinated. However, this only happens in a small proportion of people, even with the Delta variant. When these infections occur among vaccinated people, they tend to be mild.

Learn more about the [effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines](#).



## Safety

COVID-19 vaccines are [safe and effective](#). Vaccines cannot give you COVID-19. You may have side effects after vaccination. These are normal and should go away within a few days.

COVID-19 vaccines are [safe and effective](#). Millions of people in the United States have received COVID-19 vaccines. COVID-19 vaccines have undergone and continue to undergo the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history, which includes studies about adolescents and children. This monitoring includes using both established and new safety [monitoring systems](#)  to make sure that COVID-19 vaccines are safe.

COVID-19 vaccines cannot give you COVID-19. There is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines cause fertility problems. Read more to [bust myths and learn the facts about COVID-19 vaccines](#).

CDC has developed a tool, **v-safe**, to help monitor how people are feeling after getting COVID-19 vaccines. **V-safe** is a free, easy-to-use, and confidential smartphone-based tool that uses text messaging and web surveys to provide personalized health check-ins after vaccination. Parents and caregivers can enroll themselves and their children ages 5 years and older in **v-safe** and report how they are feeling after they have been vaccinated for COVID-19. Learn how the federal government is using **v-safe** and other systems to monitor and [ensure the safety of COVID-19 vaccines](#).

While COVID-19 vaccines were developed rapidly, [all steps have been taken to ensure their safety and effectiveness](#).

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## You may have side effects after vaccination, but these are normal

After COVID-19 vaccination, you may have some [side effects](#). These are normal signs that your body is building protection. The side effects from COVID-19 vaccination, such as tiredness, headache, or chills, may affect your ability to do daily activities, but they should go away within a few days. Learn more about [what to expect after getting vaccinated](#).

### Possible Side Effects in Children Ages 5 Years and Older

Children may have some [side effects](#), which are normal signs that their body is building protection. These side effects may affect a child's ability to do daily activities, but they should go away in a few days. Some children have no side effects. Severe allergic reactions (like anaphylaxis) and complications (like [myocarditis and pericarditis](#)) are rare. Learn more about [possible side effects in children](#).

## Population Immunity

Population immunity, also known as herd immunity or community immunity, means that enough people in a community are protected from getting a disease because they've already had the disease or because they've been vaccinated.

Population immunity makes it hard for a disease to spread from person to person. It even protects those who cannot be vaccinated, like newborns or people who are allergic to a vaccine. The percentage of people who need to have protection to achieve population immunity varies by disease.

We are still learning how many people need to be vaccinated against COVID-19 before the population can be considered protected.

As we know more, CDC will continue to update our recommendations for both vaccinated and unvaccinated people.

## Variants and Vaccines

- COVID-19 vaccines approved or authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) help protect against [Delta and other known variants](#).
- These vaccines are especially effective at keeping people from getting very sick or dying from COVID-19.
- To maximize protection against COVID-19 and prevent possibly spreading it to others, you should wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an [area of substantial or high transmission](#) even if you are fully vaccinated.
- We don't know how effective the vaccines will be against new variants.

### For Healthcare and Public Health

[Clinical and Professional Resources](#): Toolkits and resources for healthcare workers and public health professionals.

### Related Pages

- › [When You've Been Fully Vaccinated](#)
- › [COVID-19 Vaccines for Children and Teens](#)
- › [Myths and Facts about COVID-19 Vaccines](#)
- › [Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccination](#)
- › [Benefits of Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

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