

COVID-19 Vaccines - Answers to Common Questions

Definition

- COVID-19 vaccines have been approved by the FDA
- They are highly effective and safe
- During the deadly pandemic of 2020, their arrival in 2021 restored hope of a return to normal. Their creation is a true miracle of medical research
- **Updated: April 1, 2023** (version 10)

Health Information

Trusted Websites for Accurate Answers to COVID-19 Questions

- There are current and future questions not addressed in this brief handout.
- In addition, some answers may change based on new studies and new data.
- When seeking answers to your questions, only use science-based websites. Here are some of the best:
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines>.
- American Academy of Pediatrics website for parents: www.healthychildren.org
- Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) Vaccine Education Center website: <https://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/vaccine-education-center>
- Always follow the most current CDC recommendations if they are different than those in this document.

Care Advice

1. Efficacy of the COVID-19 Vaccine:

- **Vaccine Efficacy.** All the vaccines approved by the FDA for use in the US are highly effective at preventing COVID-19. The protection against getting the new variants have gone down some. But, in those cases, most people have mild symptoms or none. The vaccines continue to prevent serious symptoms, complications and the need for hospital or ICU admission. This is even true for the variants, such as Omicron. They work better than flu vaccines.
- **Other Major Benefits.** Vaccines also prevent the rare serious delayed onset complications from COVID-19 infections that can occur in some people. One example is multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (also called MIS-C). Another is "long hauler" symptoms (such as brain fog or chronic breathing problems). Key: Vaccines prevent death and long-term complications from COVID-19 infections.
- **Vaccines and Normal Life.** Having almost everyone vaccinated is the only way we can get back to normal. Normal means no masks, open schools, safe to travel, safe to visit grandparents, less mental health crisis and no deaths from COVID-19.
- **Best COVID Vaccine.** Any vaccine approved by the FDA is highly effective and safe. Get the first one that becomes available to you. It will protect you and your family from serious illness.

2. **Safety and Side Effects of the COVID-19 Vaccine:**
 - **Vaccine Safety.** Very safe based on tracking thousands of vaccinated people. Most people get a sore arm for a few days. About half get some general symptoms for about 24 hours, such as feeling tired and achy. A smaller number have a fever. These are the normal side effects seen with most vaccines and they go away quickly. They show your immune system is working. Serious reactions are extremely rare.
 - **COVID Arm.** Large red blotchy rash may occur at the injection site. Feels somewhat itchy. Redness can last for a week. It's a harmless local reaction. It may or may not occur with the next shot. Less than 1 per 100 people have this reaction. Mainly with Moderna vaccine.
 - **Blood Clot Concerns.** Very rare. Occur in about 1 person per million vaccinated people. Blood clots occur much more commonly in people who get the natural COVID-19 infection. (Note: have NOT occurred with Moderna or Pfizer vaccines)
 - **Myocarditis Concerns.** Myocarditis is inflammation of the heart muscle. Main symptoms are chest pain and shortness of breath. Symptoms start within 1 week of getting the vaccine. Very rare side effect of the COVID-19 vaccines. Occurs in about 6 per million vaccinated people. Mainly in teen or young adult males. The symptoms are most often mild and go away quickly. Myocarditis occurs much more commonly in people who get the natural COVID-19 infection. Plus it is more severe in them.
 - **Vaccine Site.** Find a nearby vaccine site at [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) or call your doctor's office.
3. **Protection after the COVID-19 Vaccine and Booster Shot:**
 - **Start of Vaccine Protection.** Full protection is reached about 2 weeks after you complete the final dose of the primary series. Full protection is reached right away after you complete the booster dose.
 - **Duration of Vaccine Protection.** Research data has confirmed that antibody protection is still high in most people 6 months or longer after completing the vaccine series.
 - **COVID-19 Vaccine Primary Series.** CDC recommends the COVID-19 vaccine primary series for all children 6 months and older. During the first 6 months, babies are usually protected by antibodies from their mother. This is true if she is up-to-date on her COVID-19 vaccines.
 - **Booster Shots.** CDC recommends for children after completing their primary series. Stay up to date by getting all recommended boosters when eligible.
4. **Reinfection after the COVID-19 Vaccine:**
 - **Breakthrough cases** are COVID-19 infections that happen despite vaccine antibody protection. They mainly occur when new variants become dominant in the community. Most patients only get mild symptoms. The vaccine continues to protect against most serious complications, hospital admissions and deaths.
5. **COVID-19 Vaccines Eligibility and Special Patients:**
 - **Adults.** Approved for all ages
 - **Children and Teens.** Currently approved for children 6 months and older. Importance: while most children have mild or asymptomatic infections, they can get rare complications such as MIS-C. Also, they can innocently transmit the disease to others.
 - **Pregnant Women.** Vaccines are approved and safe.
 - **Breastfeeding Mothers.** Vaccines are approved and safe. Studies show that breastmilk passes vaccine antibody protection against COVID-19 to the baby.
 - **Underlying High Risk Conditions.** Vaccines are approved and safe. These patients need the vaccine protection the most. If you have questions about a specific condition, discuss with your doctor.
 - **Person Already had the Disease.** Get the vaccine. It provides higher levels of antibodies and better protection than the immunity following a COVID infection. Restriction: not approved until you are over any acute symptoms and 10 days have passed.

6. Reasons to Postpone a Scheduled COVID-19 Vaccine:

- **Positive COVID-19 Test.** Postpone until 10 days and the symptoms are improving.
- **Exposed to COVID-19, But No Symptoms.** Postpone until 10 days have passed from the last day of exposure.
- **Child is Sick, But Has a Negative COVID-19 Test.** For moderate or severe illness (including a fever), postpone until fever gone and symptoms are improving. For mild symptoms (such as runny nose or mild diarrhea without fever), can receive the vaccine. This is true for most vaccines.
- **Flu and COVID-19 Vaccines.** Can be given at the same time. No waiting period needed between the 2 shots.

Call Your Doctor If

- You have other questions or concerns

Pediatric Care Advice

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