COVID-19 VACCINATION: WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND

With the COVID-19 vaccine rollout fully underway it is important to answer basic questions about the vaccines and separate fact from fiction.

Getting vaccinated is essential to our return to normalcy, and it requires everyone’s participation. We can all do our part by spreading facts, not COVID-19!

Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe?

COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. Millions of people in the U.S. have received COVID-19 vaccines, and these vaccines have undergone the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) ensures safety before vaccines are made available. Data from large trials of diverse patient groups (age, race ethnicity, etc.) are reviewed by experts who are completely independent from both the government and the manufacturers responsible for creating the vaccines. Pregnant or lactating women who find themselves part of a group recommended to receive the COVID-19 vaccine may choose to be vaccinated; in these cases, a consultation with a healthcare provider is recommended.

How do the COVID-19 vaccines work?

COVID-19 is the illness that results when our bodies are infected with the virus called SARS-CoV-2. When you receive a COVID-19 vaccine, your body builds up the immunity it needs to fight the COVID-19 illness and lessen the mild-to-severe symptoms. It is important to remember that it takes the body a few weeks after vaccination to produce the necessary antibodies to protect you from COVID-19. It is possible to become infected with SARS-CoV-2 just before or just after vaccination and get sick with COVID-19.
Will the vaccines be effective against new variants of the coronavirus?
The presence of new strains makes it even more important for you to get vaccinated against COVID-19 when it is your turn. When more people are vaccinated, there are fewer chances for COVID-19 to spread, regardless of the mutation. Scientists expected that the virus would mutate because viruses change all the time. From the data that are currently available, the vaccines appear to be effective against the new strains of SARS-CoV-2.

What side effects can I expect from the COVID-19 vaccine?
You may experience side effects such as the ones listed below for up to a week after your vaccine; they are more likely to occur after your second dose if you are receiving a multi-dose vaccine. If they persist or worsen after a week, contact your healthcare provider immediately.

- Localized swelling, tenderness, redness, or warm to the touch
- Fever
- Chills
- Body aches/headaches
- Joint pain
- Fatigue

Taking pain relievers like acetaminophen or ibuprofen can help prevent or lessen these symptoms. These side effects are proof of your body building up the immunity it needs to fight COVID-19.

Should I still get the vaccine if I’ve tested positive for COVID-19?
Vaccination is highly recommended even if you have previously tested positive for the virus due to the possibility of re-infection. However, if you were treated with monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma you should wait 90 days after treatment to be vaccinated. If you develop COVID-19 in between doses of a multi-dose vaccination, the CDC recommends deferring your second dose at least 10 days following your diagnosis and until you have been fever-free for 24 hours.

Can I test positive for COVID-19 because of the vaccine?
No, it is impossible for any of the vaccines currently authorized by the FDA to cause a positive result from a viral test (a test taken to see if you have a current infection). Additionally, none of the existing vaccines can give you COVID-19 because they do not use a live virus strain.

Are there any single dose vaccines? How important is the second dose?
There are single dose COVID-19 vaccines that may soon be available, but currently all COVID-19 vaccines being given in the U.S. require a second dose. If you are receiving a multi-dose vaccine, it’s essential that you get that second dose because you are still at risk for getting COVID-19 until you are fully vaccinated. The first dose of the vaccine is usually meant to prime your body for the virus, while the second dose strengthens your body’s immune defenses.
Can I stop wearing my mask after I’ve been vaccinated?
No, you need to continue masking when you go out in public until enough people are vaccinated and “herd immunity” is reached. Herd immunity occurs when a high percentage of the population is immune to a disease through vaccination or prior illness. The vaccine is effective at preventing you from getting sick with COVID-19, but we do not know if it prevents you from being able to spread COVID-19 without symptoms. In order to prevent this “asymptomatic spread” to the vulnerable people in your community, continue to wear a mask, practice hand hygiene, and keep a distance of at least 6 feet between yourself and others until CDC and/or local health authorities let you know that it is safe to stop.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES


