

COVID-19 FAQs

EDUCATION RESOURCES FOR BLACK COMMUNITIES

Here are some of the most frequently asked questions we've heard from Black Americans. These questions have been vetted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). To learn more and to get the most up-to-date information, please visit [GetVaccineAnswers.org](https://www.getvaccineanswers.org)

FAQS

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1. WHY SHOULD I GET VACCINATED?

Getting immunized against COVID-19 will keep most people from getting sick. Even in a rare case where one does catch the virus, a vaccine will likely prevent you from becoming seriously ill.

Protecting yourself also protects the people around you, like those at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 or those who can't get vaccinated — like infants, children or people with weakened immune systems from things like chemotherapy for cancer.

2. ARE THE COVID-19 VACCINES SAFE?

Yes. Researchers began developing vaccines for COVID-19 in January 2020, based on decades of understanding immune response and how vaccines work.

Based on the results, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized two vaccines for public use in December 2020. The vaccines met the agency's rigorous and science based standards for quality, safety, and effectiveness.

3. HAVE ENOUGH PEOPLE TAKEN THE VACCINE SO WE KNOW THAT IT'S SAFE?

All COVID-19 vaccines were tested in clinical trials involving tens of thousands of people to make sure they meet safety standards and protect adults of different ages, races, and ethnicities – including Black people.

Millions of people in the United States have received COVID-19 vaccines, and these vaccines have undergone the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history.

This monitoring includes using both established and new safety monitoring systems to make sure that COVID-19 vaccines are safe.

4. CAN I CATCH COVID-19 FROM THE VACCINES?

No, it's not possible to get COVID-19 from the current FDA-authorized vaccines.

5. ARE THERE SIDE EFFECTS FROM THE VACCINES?

It's normal to experience some mild discomfort following a vaccine. This means it's working and creating an immune response in your body.

You may feel soreness or experience some swelling in your arm. You may also feel tired, have a headache, fever, or chills.

These symptoms may impact your daily activities, but they shouldn't last more than 2-3 days. If they continue or get worse, call your doctor, nurse, or clinic.

6. IF I HAVE SIDE EFFECTS LIKE SWELLING IN MY ARM, FEELING TIRED, HEADACHES OR A FEVER OR CHILLS, HOW LONG COULD THESE SYMPTOMS LAST?

These symptoms may impact your daily activities, but they shouldn't last more than 2-3 days. If they continue or get worse, call your doctor, nurse, or clinic.

7. COULD I HAVE AN ALLERGIC REACTION?

Severe allergic reactions to vaccines are extremely rare. The FDA says the authorized COVID-19 vaccines appear to be safe for people with common food or environmental allergies.

If you have had an immediate allergic reaction — even if it was not severe — to a vaccine or injectable

therapy for another disease, ask your doctor if you should get a COVID-19 vaccine. Your doctor will help you decide if it is safe for you to get vaccinated.

8. DID THE COVID-19 VACCINE CLINICAL TRIAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS INCLUDE BLACK AMERICANS LIKE ME?

Researchers made sure that the trials included adults of diverse backgrounds, races, ethnicities, and geographic areas. They collaborated with faith leaders, community organizations, and health clinics to reach volunteers from many different walks of life across the United States.

Medical experts and doctors want to make sure the vaccines work safely and effectively for as many people as possible. People may respond differently to vaccines based on factors like age, gender, and health conditions — so it is important to have a diverse group of participants in clinical trials. COVID-19 has hit hard in the Black and Hispanic communities. Historically, these populations haven't always been included in clinical research, but with COVID-19 vaccines researchers made sure volunteers included people of color, as well as people over the age of 65 who are at higher risk of complications from the virus.

At this time, the studies do not include pregnant women or young children, but testing with those groups will likely begin in the near future. Pregnant women who get infected with COVID-19 disease are more likely to have severe disease.

People who are pregnant and part of a group recommended to receive COVID-19 vaccine, such as healthcare personnel, may choose to be vaccinated. A conversation between pregnant patients and their clinicians may help them decide whether to get vaccinated.

See “What groups of people will be included in the real-world vaccine assessments?” for more information (CDC) by clicking here (URL Below) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/effectiveness.html>

9. HOW DO THESE VACCINES PROTECT ME?

When we get a vaccine, it activates our immune response. This helps our bodies learn to fight off the virus without the danger of an actual infection. If we are exposed to the virus in the future, our immune system “remembers” how to fight it.

Some COVID-19 vaccines use messenger RNA, or mRNA. mRNA vaccines do not contain a live virus — they give our bodies “instructions” for how to make and fight the harmless spike-shaped proteins that will protect against a COVID-19 infection. While these vaccines use new technology, researchers have been studying them for decades.

10. SHOULD I GET VACCINATED IF I'VE ALREADY HAD COVID-19?

Most of the COVID-19 vaccines in development will require people to get two shots, given about 3 weeks apart, in order to work. The first shot starts building your immune response. The second shot is needed to give you the full protection the vaccine can offer.

You have to get both shots to be protected. It takes time for your body to build immunity after vaccination, so you might not get full protection until a week or two after you get the second shot.

The different types of vaccine are not interchangeable, so your doctor or pharmacist will help make sure you get the same type of vaccine for both shots.

11. HOW LONG DOES THE COVID-19 VACCINE LAST?

Immunization against COVID-19 will help protect you for the near future, but it's still not clear how long the protection will last. We will have a clearer picture of how long immunity lasts in years to come when we have collected more data.

Both natural immunity and immunity from the vaccine are important ways to fight COVID-19 that experts are trying to learn more about, and places like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will keep the public informed as new evidence becomes available.

mRNA COVID-19 vaccines may be administered to people with underlying medical conditions provided they have not had a severe or immediate allergic reaction to any of the ingredients in the vaccine.

Talk with your doctor, nurse or other health provider to discuss whether to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

12. ARE THE COVID-19 VACCINES FREE?

There shouldn't be a cost to get vaccinated. Insurance providers will cover the cost of the vaccine, and the U.S. government has set up a system to cover costs for those who do not have insurance.

Vaccine doses bought by the U.S. government will be given to the public for free, however, vaccination providers will be able to charge an administration fee for giving the shot to someone. Vaccine providers can get this fee reimbursed by the patient's public or private insurance company or, for uninsured patients, by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund.

13. HOW WILL THE COVID-19 VACCINES AFFECT ME IF I HAVE PRE-EXISTING MEDICAL CONDITIONS?

Adults of any age with certain underlying medical conditions are at increased risk for severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19.

14. I HAVE LUPUS. CAN I TAKE THE VACCINES?

People with autoimmune conditions may receive an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine. However, they should consult with their doctor, nurse or other health provider to discuss whether to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

15. WILL I STILL HAVE TO WEAR A MASK?

Yes. Until enough Americans are vaccinated, it's important to continue to wear a mask, stay 6 feet apart from people you don't live with, avoid crowds, and wash your hands frequently.

Researchers are working to understand whether you can still carry the virus and spread it to others if you've had the vaccine and are protected from getting sick.

For more resources to make informed decisions about COVID-19 visit [VaccineToolkitBlackCommunity.org](https://www.vaccineToolkitBlackCommunity.org)