Get Vaccinated Against COVID-19
All About the COVID-19 Vaccine

Health care providers recommend most people get vaccinated against COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccines are effective, safe and crucial to stop the spread of the virus. Get vaccinated to help yourself, your family, your community and those who are not able to get the vaccine.

A COVID-19 vaccine is now available to most people in the United States. This resource is meant to help you learn about the vaccine as well as about additional and booster doses.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers have tested several vaccines under strict guidelines. While it may seem to some people that the vaccine was developed quickly, the vaccine was actually developed over a long time based on years of research used for other virus vaccines. This earlier research made it possible to create the COVID-19 vaccine in a shorter time than usual.

Why get vaccinated?

Vaccines help build the body’s ability to fight off a virus. Examples are the influenza vaccine, the chickenpox vaccine and many others.

A vaccine may not keep you from getting COVID-19. However, if you do get the illness, the vaccine may keep you from becoming seriously ill. It may also keep you from developing complications due to the illness. That may be a lifesaving benefit of the vaccine.

As researchers and health care providers know more about the COVID-19 virus and the available vaccines, they recommend that everyone who is eligible for a vaccine get one. Some benefits of vaccinating your family include:

- Your family may not have to quarantine after exposure.
- Your child may miss less school.
- Your family may be able to play sports, hang out with friends, take part in other activities and worry less about getting COVID-19.
- Your family’s mental health may improve with a return to some normalcy.
The U.S. Food & Drug Administration, the FDA, has said the vaccines for COVID-19 are safe and effective. How effective the vaccines are varies by type of vaccine you receive, your age and overall health as well as other factors. Talk to your health care provider if you have questions.

Who should get vaccinated?

Everyone who is eligible should get vaccinated unless their health care provider tells them otherwise. Eligible people include those who are trying to become pregnant now or might become pregnant in the future and those who are pregnant and breastfeeding.

Vaccine options for ages 18 and older

- The two-dose Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. You get these two doses at least 21 days apart.
- The two-dose Moderna vaccine. You get these two doses at least 28 days apart.
- The one-dose Johnson & Johnson Janssen vaccine.

Vaccine options for ages 5 to 17

- The two-dose Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. Your child gets these two doses at least 21 days apart.
Should I get an additional dose if I have a weakened immune system?

All people who have weakened immune systems, called being immunocompromised, should get an additional dose. You may also hear this called a third dose.

People who have weakened immune systems may not have responded as well as needed to protect them from COVID-19 after receiving the vaccine. The additional dose of the vaccine may provide better protection against COVID-19. People who have weakened immune systems often need more than one vaccination for various illnesses.

Currently, the additional dose is recommended for people who:

• Are receiving certain types of cancer treatment for tumors or cancers of the blood.
• Are receiving treatment with corticosteroids or other medications that may suppress the immune system.
• Received an organ transplant and are taking medication to suppress the immune system.
• Received a stem cell transplant within the last two years.
• Have a moderate or severe primary immunodeficiency disorder such as DiGeorge syndrome or Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome.
• Have advanced or untreated HIV infection.

You can get an additional dose any time after four weeks have passed since you received the single dose of the Johnson & Johnson Janssen vaccine or the second dose of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines.
Who should get a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and who is eligible?

Most people should get the booster dose as soon as they are eligible.

The Pfizer BioNTech, the Moderna, and the Johnson & Johnson Janssen vaccines have been authorized to be given as a booster.

**If you received the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine series**

Those who should receive a booster dose of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines include those who are:

- 65 years of age and older.
- Living in a long-term care facility.
- 50 to 64 years of age and who have an underlying health condition that might put them at risk of severe disease. Examples of underlying conditions include diabetes, asthma, COPD, obesity and mood disorders.

In addition, the following may get a booster dose:

- Those who are 18 to 49 years of age and have an underlying health condition that might put them at risk of severe disease.
- Those who are 18 to 64 years of age and are at increased risk for COVID-19 exposure and transmission because of their job or time spent in an institutional setting. Examples include health care workers, teachers, day care staff, grocery workers and those in homeless shelters and prisons.

**If you received the Johnson & Johnson Janssen vaccine**

All people who received the Janssen vaccine should get a vaccine booster.

Which brand of booster should you get?

While it is recommended that you get the same booster brand as your initial vaccine, it is safe and acceptable to get any of the authorized COVID-19 boosters.

When should people get the booster?

It is important to get a booster of a vaccine at the right time.

- If you received the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine series, get a booster dose six or more months after your second dose of the initial vaccine series. Health care providers recommend people who are immunocompromised get the booster six months after they received the additional dose.
- If you received the Johnson & Johnson Janssen COVID-19 vaccine, get your booster two or more months after you received your vaccine. If you have a weakened immune system and received one of the other COVID-19 vaccines as an additional dose already, you do not need a booster dose of the Janssen vaccine at this time.

Any of the recommendations in this resource may change as health care providers learn more. For the most up-to-date information and recommendations, refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website.
**Why should people get a booster?**

Health care providers have learned that protection may have waned over time since people received their first dose or doses. The booster may provide better protection from COVID-19.

Before you get an additional dose or a booster, your health care team needs proof you received the first dose or doses. You can show your vaccination card as proof or your health care provider needs to find documentation in your medical records.

If you are eligible to receive an additional or booster dose, get it as soon as you are able according to the current guidelines. Refer to the CDC for information about who should get an additional or booster dose and when to get it.
What are the side effects of the vaccine?

Short-term mild or moderate vaccine reactions last only a day or two. About 15% of people develop short-term soreness at the injection site. About half of people who get the vaccine develop a headache, chills, fatigue, muscle or joint pain or a fever lasting a day or two.

Keep in mind these side effects mean the immune system is responding to the vaccine. The benefits of the vaccine outweigh the discomfort of the side effects.

When people received the additional or booster doses, studies show people have similar symptoms to the ones they had after the first dose or doses. These symptoms are usually mild and only last a day or so.

What to do about side effects

Many people do not have reactions after vaccination. However, if you do, this does not mean you have COVID-19. If you have a reaction, take some time to rest and allow your body to recover.

Side effects should not keep you from going to work or doing other activities. However, stay home if you have a fever. It is not necessary to have a COVID-19 test or quarantine.

If you have reactions that prevent you from eating, sleeping or going to work, contact your health care provider. Also contact your health care provider if you have reactions that last longer than three days.

Signs of an allergic reaction include hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness or weakness. If you have any of these signs, call 911 or have someone drive you to the nearest emergency department.

Where to get vaccinated or get an additional or booster dose

It’s easy to find somewhere to get the vaccine. It is available in many places – doctors’ offices, retail stores, pharmacies, malls, airports and community centers.

If you need help finding a place to get vaccinated or get an additional or booster dose, call your health care provider or your local county health department. You can also use the CDC website to find vaccination locations in your area.
Do Not Delay: Get Vaccinated!

Please consider getting vaccinated. Consider getting your children and any others in your household vaccinated. Getting vaccinated helps protect you and your family from severe disease and helps you stay healthy.
Notes
BARBARA WOODWARD LIPS PATIENT EDUCATION CENTER

Mrs. Lips, a resident of San Antonio, Texas, was a loyal Mayo Clinic patient of more than 40 years and a self-made business leader who significantly expanded her family’s activities in oil, gas and ranching. Upon her death in 1995, Mrs. Lips paid the ultimate compliment by leaving her entire estate to Mayo Clinic. By naming the Barbara Woodward Lips Patient Education Center, Mayo honors her generosity, her love of learning, her belief in patient empowerment and her dedication to high-quality care.

This material is for your education and information only. This content does not replace medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. New medical research may change this information. If you have questions about a medical condition, always talk with your health care provider.