



Patient Education

All About the COVID-19 Vaccine



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Health care providers recommend that all eligible people get vaccinated against COVID-19. These vaccines are effective and safe. They are vital 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.

COVID-19 vaccines are now available to most people in the United States. Read on to learn about the vaccines and the additional booster doses.

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

Why be 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. But if you do get the illness, the vaccine protects you from becoming seriously ill. It also keeps you from complications that may come from the illness. That can be a lifesaving benefit of a 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 include these:

- Your family members may not have to quarantine after exposure.
- Your child or children may miss less school.
- Your family members may be able to play sports, spend time with friends, take part in other activities and worry less about getting COVID-19.
- Your family members' mental health may improve with a return to regular activities.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, called the FDA, has said the vaccines for COVID-19 are safe and effective. How effective the vaccines are depends on the type of vaccine you receive, your age and your overall health, and other factors. Talk to your health care provider if you have questions.



Who should get vaccinated?

Everyone who is eligible should get vaccinated unless a 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 this includes those who are pregnant now and those who are breastfeeding.

Vaccine options for ages 18 and older

- The 2-dose Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. You get these 2 doses at least 21 days apart.
- The 2-dose Moderna vaccine. You get these 2 doses at least 28 days apart.
- The 1-dose Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Vaccine options for ages 5 to 17

- The 2-dose Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Your child gets these 2 doses at least 21 days apart.

Should people with a weakened immune system get an additional dose?

All people who have weakened immune systems, called being immunocompromised, should get an additional dose. You may hear this called a third dose. This is not the booster dose. A booster dose is in addition to this third dose.

After receiving the vaccine, people who have weakened immune systems may not respond as well as needed to protect them from COVID-19. The additional dose of the vaccine may provide better protection against COVID-19.

At this time, the additional dose is recommended for people who:

- Receive certain types of cancer treatment for tumors or cancers of the blood.
- Receive 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 2 years.
- Have a moderate or severe primary disorder of the immune system, such as DiGeorge syndrome or Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome.
- Have advanced or untreated HIV infection.

Once you receive the single dose of the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccine or the second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines, you can get an additional dose any time after four weeks have passed.

This additional dose is not a booster dose. Those who received the Moderna vaccine should get the full primary series dose as their additional dose. They should not get the half dose used for boosters.

Who should get a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine?

All people 5 years and older should get a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has been authorized as a booster for those 5 years of age and older. The Moderna vaccine has been authorized as a booster for those 18 years of age and older.

If you received the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccine, a booster dose of either the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine is recommended.

Second booster dose for Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines

- The second booster dose of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is recommended for all those 50 years and older.
- It is also recommended for all those 12 years and older who are moderately or severely immunocompromised.
- The second booster dose of Moderna vaccine is recommended for all those 50 years and older.
- It is also recommended for those 18 years and older who are moderately or severely immunocompromised.

Second booster doses for Janssen/Johnson & Johnson

All people 18 years and older who received the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccine and a Janssen/Johnson & Johnson booster dose should get a second booster. Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines are preferred.

Which brand of booster should you get?

If you had the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine, it is recommended that you get the same booster brand. But it is also safe and acceptable to get the other brand as a booster.

The Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccine is not recommended as a booster. This is because of the increased risk of a clotting disorder or Guillain Barre Syndrome. This vaccine is only recommended as a primary vaccine for those who should not get a Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine. It also is available for those who choose not to get either the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine.

When should you get the booster?

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

If you received the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine series

- Get a booster dose **5 months** after your second dose of the initial vaccine series. Health care providers advise people who are immunocompromised to get the booster **4 months** after they received the second dose.

If you received the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine series

- Get a first booster dose **5 months** after your second dose of the initial vaccine series.

If you received the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine

- Get your booster **2 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, get a booster of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines **2 months** after your additional dose.

When should you get the second booster?

If you received the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine series

- Adults 50 years and older are recommended to get a second booster dose of Moderna vaccine **4 months** after the first booster dose.
- Those 18 years and older who are moderately or severely immunocompromised are recommended to get the second booster dose of Moderna vaccine **4 months** after the first booster dose.

If you received the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine series

- Adults 50 years and older are recommended to get a second booster dose of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine **4 months** after the first booster dose.
- Those 12 years and older who are moderately or severely immunocompromised are recommended to get a second booster dose of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine **4 months** after the first booster dose.

If you received the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine

- People ages 18 years and older who received Janssen/Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines for both their primary series dose and first booster dose may receive a second booster dose using the Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA vaccine. Get this second booster at least **4 months** after the first booster dose for a total of 3 doses.
- All people and those 18 years and older who are moderately or severely immunocompromised who received a Janssen/Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine as the single primary series dose and got Moderna or Pfizer BioNTech as an additional dose and a first booster vaccine are recommended to get a second booster dose using the Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Get this second booster dose **4 months** after the first booster dose for a total of 3 doses of the Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

Any of the recommendations in this resource may change as health care providers learn more. For the most up-to-date information and advice, refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website.

Why should you 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.



What are the side effects of the vaccine?

Short-term mild or moderate vaccine side effects 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.

Studies show that people who get additional or booster doses have similar side effects to the ones they had after the first dose or doses. These side effects 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 to 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.



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

Where to get vaccinated or get an additional or booster dose

It is 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 to get an additional or booster dose, call your health care provider or your local county health department. You also can 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, your family and your community from severe disease and helps you stay healthy.



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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.

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