COVID-19 Vaccine

Billions of doses of the COVID-19 vaccine have been safely administered around the world since December 2020. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that everyone 5 years and older be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to protect against the disease and help stop the pandemic.

Q: Why should I get the vaccine?

Since the coronavirus emerged in 2019, it has killed millions of people around the world. The best way to avoid infection and prevent communal spread of COVID-19 is to get vaccinated. The U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized or approved Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines as safe and highly effective in preventing severe cases of COVID-19 that cause hospitalization or death. All FDA approved and authorized COVID-19 vaccines are free.

Q: How can I get the vaccine?

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The COVID-19 vaccine is widely available at health clinics and pharmacies across the country. Call your physician to request an appointment. Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s vaccine website at [https://www.vaccines.gov/](https://www.vaccines.gov/), text your ZIP code to 438829, or call 1-800-232-0233 to find locations near you. Transportation may be available to vaccination sites if needed.

**Q: How much does the vaccine cost?**

The vaccine is 100% free, including all administrative fees. Providers may request patient information, such as social security number, to verify insurance status but this information is not required for people to receive the vaccine.

**Q: What are the differences between the COVID vaccines?**

Both Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines require a second dose, though with slightly different time intervals: Pfizer BioNTech’s second dose is given 21 days after the initial dose, while Moderna’s is scheduled for 28 days after the initial dose. The Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine is given in one dose.

The Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines are not interchangeable. Whichever vaccine you receive as your first dose must be the same for the second dose. Keep a record of which vaccine you receive.

**Q: I’m fully vaccinated. Do I need a booster?**

The CDC has approved a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccines for certain populations.

Individuals who received the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines are eligible for the booster six months after their second dose if they are older than 65. In addition, those older than 18 who live in long-term care settings, have underlying medical conditions, or work in high-risk occupations are also eligible for a booster.

People 18 years and older should receive a booster shot at least 2 months after receiving their Johnson & Johnson/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine.

Any of the available vaccines may be used for the booster, regardless of whether the initial vaccination was from Pfizer, Moderna or Johnson & Johnson.

**Q: I’ve already had COVID-19. Do I need the vaccine?**

**Yes.** The CDC recommends that people get vaccinated even if they already had COVID-19. The amount of immunity created by having had COVID-19 is unknown; reinfection, with serious health complications, is possible. However, if you are currently infected with COVID-19, you should not receive the vaccine until you have recovered and the isolation period (20 days for severe cases, 10 days for asymptomatic) has ended.

**Q: Will the vaccine give me COVID-19?**
No. None of the vaccines contains SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID 19. The vaccine cannot give you COVID-19.

Q: What are the possible side effects of the vaccine?

In general, side effects from the vaccine could include redness, swelling or pain at the site of the injection, feeling tired or unwell, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, fever, nausea and/or swollen lymph nodes.

If you experience soreness at the site of the vaccination, moving your arm around can help relieve pain and swelling. Drink plenty of fluids if you have a fever. These symptoms, and all other side effects, can last 24-48 hours.

Contact your doctor if the soreness or redness at the site of the shot increases after 24 hours, or the side effects are worrying you or lasting longer than a couple of days.

With the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, there is risk for what the CDC calls “a rare but serious adverse event—blood clots with low platelets.” This condition has occurred at a rate of roughly seven per 1 million vaccinated women between the ages of 18 and 49 years old.

Q: What should someone with a spinal cord injury be aware of when receiving the vaccine?

Many people with spinal cord injuries receive shots without any problems. Barring any allergies to ingredients in the COVID-19 vaccine, there is nothing specific to the vaccine that poses a concern for individuals with spinal cord injuries. However, any pain or discomfort below the level of injury potentially caused by side effects could lead to increased blood pressure and trigger autonomic dysreflexia (AD,) a potentially life-threatening condition. Symptoms will vary, but signs of AD may include pounding headache, flushed face, sweating above the level of injury, goose flesh below the level of injury, nasal stuffiness, nausea, and a slow pulse (slower than 60 beats per minute).

As a precaution, carry a Reeve Foundation AD wallet card (containing baseline blood pressure, level of injury and emergency contacts) to the vaccination and stay on-site for 30 minutes to make certain you feel fine. Reeve wallet cards can be found at www.ChristopherReeve.org/cards.

Q: What health information should I share with the vaccine provider before getting the vaccine?

Describe all medical conditions, including if you have a bleeding disorder or are on a blood thinner, have any allergies, have a fever, are immunocompromised or take a medicine that affects your immune system, are pregnant or plan to become pregnant, are breastfeeding, or have received another COVID-19 vaccine.

Q: Who should not get the vaccine?
Anyone who has had a severe allergic reaction to any ingredient in these vaccines or has experienced a severe allergic reaction after a previous dose of this vaccine should not receive the vaccine.

**Q: What are the ingredients in the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine?**

The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine contains the following ingredients: messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA), lipids ((4-hydroxybutyl)azanediyl)bis(hexane-6,1-diyl)bis(2-hexyldecanoate), 2 [(polyethylene glycol)-2000]-N,N-ditetradecylacetamide, 1,2-Distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine, and cholesterol), potassium chloride, monobasic potassium phosphate, sodium chloride, dibasic sodium phosphate dihydrate, and sucrose.

**Q: What are the ingredients in the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine?**

The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine contains the following ingredients: messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA), lipids (SM-102, polyethylene glycol [PEG] 2000 dimyristoyl glycerol [DMG], cholesterol, and 1,2-distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine [DSPC]), tromethamine, tromethamine hydrochloride, acetic acid, sodium acetate, and sucrose.

**Q: What are the ingredients in the Johnson & COVID-19 vaccine?**

The Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine contains the following ingredients: recombinant, replication-incompetent adenovirus type 26 expressing the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein, citric acid monohydrate, trisodium citrate dihydrate, ethanol, 2-hydroxypropyl-β-cyclodextrin (HBCD), polysorbate-80, sodium chloride.

**Q: I have experienced severe allergic reactions before; should I get the vaccine?**

According to the CDC, individuals with a history of severe allergic reactions (including food, pet, venom, environmental and oral medication allergies) that are unrelated to vaccines or injectable medicines should still receive the vaccine.

Individuals with a history of any level of allergic reaction to other vaccines or injectable medicine should speak with their doctor to determine if it is safe to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Individuals who have had a severe allergic reaction to any ingredient in an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, or an allergic reaction to polyethylene glycol (PEG) or polysorbate, should not get either of the currently available vaccines.

Severe allergic reaction will generally occur within the hour after receiving the vaccine. Signs include difficulty breathing, swelling of the face and throat, increased heart rate, body rash, and dizziness and weakness. Individuals who have previously had severe allergic reactions should be monitored on-site for 30 minutes after receiving the vaccine.

**Q: Should I get both the flu shot and the COVID-19 vaccine?**
Yes.

Q: After I receive the vaccine, will I still need to wear a mask?

The CDC recommends that fully vaccinated individuals wear a mask indoors in areas of substantial transmission or if immune system is weakened by an underlying medical condition.

Q: Where is the best place to find out the most current and accurate information about the vaccine?


Sources: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S Department of Health and Human Services, and U.S Food & Drug Administration

Need to talk to someone?
Our Information Specialists are available to answer your questions.
Call toll-free 1-800-539-7309 Mon-Fri, 9 am-8 pm EST.
Schedule a call or ask a question online at https://www.ChristopherReeve.org/Ask

Resources on COVID-19 Vaccines:

Administration for Community Living: Disability Information and Access Line (DIAL)
https://acl.gov/DIAL
DIAL connects callers to information about how to access the COVID-19 vaccine and related supports for people with disabilities. DIAL connects callers to vaccine sites and provides information related to barriers to vaccination. Phone: 888-677-1199 or email: DIAL@n4a.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: COVID-19 Vaccines

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Statement on ACIP Booster Recommendations
https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/p0924-booster-recommendations-.html

Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation webinar by Nurse Linda on COVID-19 Vaccines
12/30/20
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOEQacAS6CU

Food and Drug Administration: COVID-19 Vaccines
HHS.gov: HHS Launches New Reimbursement Program for COVID-19 Vaccine Administration Fees Not Covered by Insurance
https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/05/03/hhs-launches-new-reimbursement-program-for-covid19-vaccine-administration-fees-not-covered-by-insurance.html
The US Department of Health and Human Services, through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) is announcing a new program covering costs of administering COVID-19 vaccines to patients enrolled in health plans that either do not cover vaccination fees or cover them with patient cost-sharing. Since providers cannot bill patients for COVID-19 vaccination fees, this new program, the COVID-19 Coverage Assistance Fund (CAF), addresses an outstanding compensation need for providers on the front lines vaccinating underinsured patients.

HHS Office of Civil Rights Factsheet: Disability Access in Vaccine Distribution
https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/disability-access-vaccine-distribution.pdf

HHS Office of Civil Rights New Legal Guidance and Resources to Ensure and Expand Access to COVID-19 Vaccines for People with Disabilities and Older Adults

HRSA: COVID-19 Vaccine Poster for Patients
The poster has info for patients on what to do if you are billed without insurance as the vaccine should be free to individuals.

HRSA: COVID-19 Vaccine Fact Sheet for Providers: What Health Care Providers Need to Know About COVID-19 Vaccine Fees and Reimbursements

Made to Save
https://madetosave.org/
Made to Save is a national grassroots effort to ensure communities hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic have access to the vaccines and timely information.

Post-Polio Health International: COVID-19 Vaccine Information for Polio Survivors
https://post-polio.org/covid-19-vaccine/

World Health Organization: COVID-19 Vaccines
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