



COVID-19 Vaccines - Frequently Asked Questions

SAFETY AND SIDE EFFECTS



What are common side effects of the COVID-19 vaccines?

Common side effects after a COVID-19 vaccine include:

- Pain, redness, or swelling in the arm where the vaccine was given (or thigh for small children)
- Fever, chills
- Headache
- Feeling tired
- Fussiness or crying (small children)
- Muscle or joint pain
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Nausea, loss of appetite

These side effects may limit your ability to do daily activities, but they should go away within a day or two. Most people only get mild side effects and some people do not get any side effects at all.

Side effects are normal and a sign that the vaccine is working. It shows that your body is learning to fight the virus and is building immunity. It is important to get all the recommended doses even if you got side effects after an earlier dose unless a vaccination provider or your doctor tells you not to.

See CDC [Possible Side Effects After Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine](#).

What if I didn't get any side effect after getting a COVID-19 vaccine?

Reactions after getting a COVID-19 vaccine can vary from person to person. Most people in clinical trials of the COVID-19 vaccines had only mild side effects, and some of them had no side effects at all. Those people still had a strong [immune response](#) to the vaccine. Vaccination protects you from severe COVID-19 infection whether or not you have side effects after vaccination.

Are there any serious reactions after COVID-19 vaccination?

Yes, serious reactions can happen but are very rare. Vaccine safety monitoring systems have identified the four serious health problems, described below. The Pfizer, Moderna, and Novavax COVID-19 vaccines are now recommended over the J&J vaccine. One reason for this is because of a rare, but serious side effect linked with J&J vaccine. If you receive a vaccine, see [Vaccine Side Effects](#) to learn about possible symptoms to look out for.

- **Anaphylaxis:** Anaphylaxis is a rare but serious allergic reaction that can happen after taking a medication or getting any vaccine. If it happens, healthcare providers can effectively and immediately treat the reaction. Other less severe allergic reactions can also happen. Learn more on the CDC webpage [Allergic Reactions after COVID-19 Vaccination](#).
- **Myocarditis and pericarditis after Pfizer, Moderna and Novavax vaccines:** Myocarditis is inflammation of the heart muscle and pericarditis is inflammation of the outer lining of the heart. Myocarditis and pericarditis after COVID-19 vaccination are rare. Most people with myocarditis or pericarditis after vaccination improve with medicine and rest and feel better quickly. People who



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experience these conditions can usually return to their normal daily activities after their symptoms improve.

Pfizer and Moderna vaccines: Most of the cases have been reported after the second dose of vaccine. Male adolescents and young adults are more likely to be affected. Extending the time between 1st and 2nd doses has been shown to decrease the risk of myocarditis. This is one of the reasons why it is now recommended that teens and young adults consider getting the second dose 8 weeks after their first dose. The risk of myocarditis appears to be lower after a booster dose than after the second dose of vaccine.

Children aged 6 months through 11 years receive lower doses of vaccine compared to people ages 12 and over. A recent [report](#) from the CDC found no increased risk for myocarditis after COVID-19 vaccination in children ages 6 months–5 years. In a [study published by the CDC](#), after approximately 8 million doses of pediatric Pfizer vaccine were given to children 5-11 years of age, 11 cases of myocarditis were reported and verified. Most of these cases were mild and recovered quickly.

A [study](#) of people aged 5 and over found that the risk of heart complications, such as myocarditis, pericarditis, and multi-system inflammatory disease (MIS-C) was higher after having COVID-19 *infection* than after getting one or more doses of Pfizer or Moderna vaccines. This finding was seen in males and females of all ages. It is also important to note that vaccine-associated myocarditis is milder and does not last as long as myocarditis due to other causes.

Novavax vaccine: Cases of myocarditis and pericarditis have been reported in people who received Novavax COVID-19 vaccine. Getting the 2nd dose of Novavax 8 weeks after the first may reduce the risk of these rare conditions.

It is important to note that COVID-19 *disease* is associated with an increased risk of stroke, acute coronary syndrome, myocardial infarction (heart attack), heart failure, arrhythmia (irregular heartbeat), and cardiac death, as well as myocarditis and pericarditis.

- **Thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS) after J&J vaccine:** TTS is a rare but serious, and sometimes fatal condition involving blood clots and low platelets. *TTS has been reported across a wide age range in males and females who received the J&J vaccine.* Women ages 18-49 years should especially be aware of the rare but increased risk of this adverse event. To learn more, visit the CDC's [Selected Adverse Events Reported After COVID-19 Vaccination](#).

Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) after J&J vaccine: GBS is a rare disorder where the body's immune system damages nerve cells. This causes muscle weakness and sometimes paralysis. Most people fully recover from GBS, but some have permanent nerve damage. *GBS has been reported in people who received the J&J vaccine.* There were more cases in men, especially men age 50 and older. Nearly all of the people became ill within 6 weeks of getting the vaccine. Most became ill in the first 3 weeks. To learn more, visit the CDC's [Selected Adverse Events Reported After COVID-19 Vaccination](#)





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For more information, visit the CDC's [Selected Adverse Events Reported After COVID-19 Vaccination](#).

To date, over 603 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been given in the US. Although side effects may happen, they are very rare. The benefits of staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccines outweigh the risks.

Are the COVID-19 vaccines likely to have any long-term side effects?

No. Long-term side effects are very unlikely. Based on what we know from other vaccines, long-term side effects happen within six weeks of getting vaccinated. For this reason, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) required companies making COVID-19 vaccines to follow trial participants for at least eight weeks. And the participants in the vaccine trials continue to be followed even though the vaccines have been authorized/approved for use. In addition, the CDC continues to closely monitor COVID-19 vaccines after they are authorized/approved and licensed. It has been well over a year since COVID-19 vaccines have been widely available (and even longer since the start of the vaccine trials). Millions of people have received COVID-19 vaccines and no long-term side effects have been identified.

In contrast, we do know that the virus that causes COVID-19 can cause several long-term effects in both adults and in children. For example, some people continue to have symptoms such as feeling very tired, having difficulty sleeping, headaches, and shortness of breath for months after their initial COVID-19 infection, often referred to as [long COVID](#). Further, a severe condition called [Multi-System Inflammatory Syndrome](#) can affect children (MIS-C) and adults (MIS-A). MIS is a rare but serious condition associated with COVID-19 in which different body parts become inflamed, including the heart, lungs, kidneys, brain, skin, eyes, or gastrointestinal organs. Many patients need to be hospitalized and, tragically, some die. COVID-19 vaccination offers protection against these “long-term” effects of the virus.

If I get a reaction after I am vaccinated, how should I report it?

If you have an adverse event (possible side effect) after you are vaccinated, even if you aren't sure that the vaccine caused it, please report it to VAERS. The Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System is an early warning system that the FDA and CDC use to detect possible safety problems. To make a report, call 1-800-822-7967 or visit <https://vaers.hhs.gov/reportevent.html>.

If you have signed up for [V-Safe](#), CDC's after-vaccination health checker, you can also report your symptoms through the smartphone app.

Neither VAERS nor V-safe provide medical advice. If you have symptoms or health problems that concern you at any time following COVID-19 vaccination, please contact your healthcare provider or seek medical treatment.





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What is in the vaccines?

Nearly all the ingredients in COVID-19 vaccines are also ingredients in many foods – fats, sugars, and salts.

In addition:

- The Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines contain messenger RNA (mRNA).
- The Johnson & Johnson/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine contains a version of a virus unrelated to the virus that causes COVID-19.
- The Novavax COVID-19 vaccine includes harmless pieces (proteins) of the virus that causes COVID-19; they are pieces of what is often called the spike protein.

These ingredients give instructions to cells in your body to create an immune response. This response helps protect you from getting sick with COVID-19 in the future. After the body produces an immune response, it discards all the vaccine ingredients just as it would discard any information that cells no longer need. This process is a part of normal body functioning.

The Novavax COVID-19 vaccine also contains an ‘adjuvant’ to strengthen the body’s immune response. Adjuvants are used in many vaccines.

COVID-19 vaccines do NOT contain ingredients like preservatives (like thimerosal or mercury), tissues (like aborted fetal cells or any materials from an animal), antibiotics, food proteins (like egg or nut products), medicines, latex, or metals.

Learn more about what ingredients are and are not in [Pfizer](#), [Moderna](#), [Novavax](#), and [Johnson & Johnson](#) COVID-19 vaccines.

Can I get COVID-19 from a vaccine?

No. You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine. None of the COVID-19 vaccines has the virus that causes COVID-19 in them. Sometimes people get a fever or feel tired for a day or two after getting a vaccine. These vaccine side effects are normal and are a sign that the body is building immunity. They should go away in a few days.

Will getting the vaccine cause me to test positive on a COVID-19 test?

No. Vaccines won’t cause you to test positive on a PCR or antigen viral test (swab or spit tests, including self-tests) that looks for current COVID-19 infection. You may test positive on some antibody (blood) tests. This is because the vaccines work by teaching your body to make antibodies.

See the public health testing webpage ph.lacounty.gov/covidtests to learn more about COVID-19 tests



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Can people who are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or trying to get pregnant now, as well as people who might become pregnant in the future. People with COVID-19 during pregnancy are more likely to deliver a preterm (earlier than 37 weeks) or stillborn infant and may also be more likely to have other pregnancy complications.

COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy helps prevent severe illness and death in people who are pregnant and protect babies younger than 6 months old from hospitalization. For more information, see the [Vaccine FAQ: Pregnancy, Breastfeeding, and Fertility](#) and the CDC webpage [COVID-19 Vaccines While Pregnant or Breastfeeding](#).

Can people with allergies get a COVID-19 vaccine?

It depends.

- People who are allergic to things like oral medication, food (including eggs), latex, pets, or pollen, or people who have a family history of allergies, can be vaccinated.
- If you have had an allergic reaction to a vaccine or injectable therapy, even if it was not severe, talk to your doctor to decide if it is safe to get vaccinated.
- If you are allergic to Polyethylene Glycol (PEG), you should not get the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine. Ask your doctor if you can get the J&J or Novavax vaccine.
- If you are allergic to polysorbate, you should not get the Novavax or J&J vaccine. Ask your doctor if you can get the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine.

There is a small risk of anaphylaxis (a severe type of allergic reaction) with any vaccine.

Information about allergic reactions may change. **Be sure to check the latest guidance on the CDC [COVID-19 Vaccines for People with Allergies](#) webpage and talk to your doctor.**

Where can I get more information?



- To print or view this FAQ or FAQs on other COVID-19 vaccine topics, scan the QR code or visit [COVID-19 vaccine FAQs](#).
- [VaccinateLACounty.com](#) – including [COVID-19 Vaccine Schedules](#) with graphics to show when each dose is due and information on [How to Get Vaccinated](#).
- CDC [Vaccines for COVID-19](#) webpage.
- CDC [Myths and Facts about COVID-19 Vaccines](#) and [FAQs about COVID-19 Vaccination](#).
- Ask your doctor if you have questions.

