

COVID-19 Vaccine Information

Frequently Asked Questions

- We are confident that the FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines are safe.
- We encourage everyone to receive the vaccine to protect themselves and help end the pandemic. Pregnant or breastfeeding and those with a history of allergic reactions to vaccines should first speak with their doctor.
- There is a lot of misinformation about the COVID-19 vaccine being shared; it is important for everyone to read the science-based facts about it.

Why should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

The COVID-19 vaccine can prevent you from getting sick with COVID-19. The vaccine gives your immune system a preview of the coronavirus, so it learns how to stop it. It triggers antibodies in your blood to attack the virus. Getting the vaccine will help you protect yourself and help end the pandemic.

When can I receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

The COVID-19 vaccine is being distributed in phases, guided by the CDC and state health authorities. People with the highest risk of complications from COVID-19 are first to receive it. This includes residents of nursing homes and frontline health care workers. As more vaccine supplies are available, more people can get vaccinated. It is expected that all U.S. adults will be able to get vaccinated by late 2021.

Is the vaccine safe?

Yes, MercyOne is confident in the safety of the vaccine with emergency use authorization from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is authorized for everyone ages 16 and older and the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine is authorized for everyone ages 18 and older. Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding and those with a history of allergic reactions to vaccines should first speak with their doctor. Like most new medicines and vaccines, the COVID-19 vaccines are tested for safety in large clinical trials with volunteers who receive the vaccine and report how they feel.

How effective is it?

The Pfizer vaccine showed an almost 95 percent efficacy during clinical trials. The Moderna had an almost 95 percent efficacy during its clinical trials.

What are the common side effects?

The side effects are like other vaccines. The most common side effects are pain/redness at the injection site, headache, fatigue, muscle/joint aches and low-grade fever. The side effects respond well to Tylenol and ibuprofen. Nausea and vomiting are also reported Moderna vaccine side effects. Most side effects last less than 24 hours and those ages 55 and older report fewer side effects.

I have a medical condition. Should I get the vaccine?

If you've been sick with COVID-19 before, you should get the vaccine due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that re-infection with COVID-19 is possible. You must wait until you have recovered from COVID-19 to be vaccinated.

If I get vaccinated, can I stop wearing my mask?

No, it is important that you continue covering your mouth and nose with a mask, washing hands often, and staying at least 6 feet away from others while the pandemic continues. Health authorities will inform us when it is safe to change our safety protocol.

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Myths and Facts

MYTH: mRNA vaccines change your DNA

FACT: According to the CDC, mRNA vaccines give our cells instructions to make copies of a harmless protein that is unique to the COVID-19 virus. Our bodies then build immune responses to that protein so they remember how to fight the virus if we are infected in the future. Because it does not enter the nucleus of the cell where DNA is kept, mRNA cannot alter or modify the genetic makeup of a person and does not interact with human DNA in any way

MYTH: The government is implanting a tracking chip via the vaccine.

FACT: The COVID-19 vaccine itself will not contain any sort of microchip or tracking device implemented by the government. Nothing except the vaccine is injected into your body.

MYTH: The vaccine will give you COVID-19 or can shed the virus.

FACT: You cannot get COVID-19 from mRNA vaccines or shed the virus after receiving one because they do not contain the live virus.

MYTH: Safety protocols were bypassed to develop the vaccine quickly.

FACT: Since the start of the pandemic, the federal government, under Operation Warp Speed (OWS), has been working to make a COVID-19 vaccine available ASAP. OWS provides federal resources and funding to speed development but keep strict standards for safety and effectiveness. The vaccine supplies were available quickly because mass production began before the FDA gave it emergency use authorization. The clinical studies were not skipped or shortened.

MYTH: mRNA technology is too new and not proven.

FACT: According to the National Institutes of Health, research on mRNA technology began in the early 1990s with testing in animals and has been studied for use in vaccines, including on humans, over the last ten years.

MYTH: The vaccine causes sterilization in women.

FACT: No significant safety concerns, including sterilization, have been observed during the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccine trials. Additionally, a vaccine cannot be approved without following set safety protocols. Approval cannot happen until last at least two months after the final shot is given during the clinical trial to monitor for safety concerns. Trial participants will be monitored for long term side effects for at least two years.

MYTH: It's better to take your chances and just get COVID-19.

FACT: While it's true that most people who have COVID-19 experience mild symptoms and recover, COVID-19 can cause severe health risks and some people still have symptoms for months after they are infected. Also, some early evidence suggests natural immunity may not last long. The COVID-19 vaccine is a safer way to build immunity with fewer health risks.

MYTH: People who are pro-life should be concerned about the way the vaccine was developed.

FACT: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have clearly stated that both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are morally acceptable. In a Dec. 14, 2020 memo, they wrote: "Neither Pfizer nor Moderna used morally compromised cell lines in the design, development, or production of the vaccine."

VISIT THESE WEBSITES FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Coronavirus 2019: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html
- MercyOne COVID-19 Vaccine Information page: www.MercyOne.org/covid19vaccine