

## Your Questions Answered: COVID-19 Vaccine

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Below are answers to frequently asked questions about the COVID-19 Pfizer vaccine. This overview will be updated on an ongoing basis and more information will be added as it becomes available.

### Vaccine Safety, Efficacy and Side Effects

#### Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?

Although we have a short time frame to evaluate this question, the Pfizer vaccine was given to 22,000 diverse individuals without serious problems.

#### Is the COVID-19 vaccine effective?

The Pfizer vaccine has been found to be 95% effective in preventing disease with Sars COV-2. This is among the very best efficacy seen with vaccines. Side effects seen include chills, aches, low grade fever and sore arm similar to those seen with the current flu shot and occur mostly after the second dose.

#### How many doses are needed?

Nearly all COVID-19 vaccines being studied in the United States require two shots, including the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. The first shot starts building protection, but everyone has to come back a few weeks later for the second one to get the most protection the vaccine can offer.

#### Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Each person will need to make that individual decision. The data we have so far show that this is a very effective and safe vaccine.

#### Does the COVID-19 vaccine have side effects? If so, what are they?

Most of the side effects occur after the second dose. They include sore arm at the site of injection, headache, fatigue, chills and fever that last for 24 hours.

#### Should I be worried about how quickly the COVID-19 vaccine was developed and brought to production?

COVID-19 vaccines were tested in large clinical trials to make sure they meet safety standards. Many people were recruited to participate in these trials to see how the vaccines offers protection to people of different ages, races, and ethnicities, as well as those with different medical conditions. In addition:

- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) carefully reviews all safety data from clinical trials and authorizes emergency vaccine use only when the expected benefits outweigh potential risks.
- The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) reviews all safety data before recommending any COVID-19 vaccine for use. Learn [how ACIP makes vaccine recommendations](#).
- The FDA and CDC will continue to monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines, to make sure even very rare side effects are identified.

## Is the COVID-19 vaccine that helpful? I heard getting COVID-19 gives you better and longer immunity than the protection a vaccine can give.

Both this disease and the vaccine are new. We don't know how long protection lasts for those who get infected or those who are vaccinated. What we do know is that COVID-19 has caused very serious illness and death for a lot of people. If you get COVID-19, you also risk giving it to loved ones who may get very sick. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is a safer choice. The clinical trial using this vaccine clearly shows it effectively reduces the likelihood of getting clinical infection by 95%.

## How do we know that the COVID-19 vaccine is safe when it is so new? Couldn't it cause problems that we don't know about yet? What about long-term problems?

A number of COVID-19 vaccines are being tested in large clinical trials to assess their safety. However, it does take time, and more people getting vaccinated before we learn about very rare or long-term side effects. That is why safety monitoring will continue. CDC has an independent group of experts that reviews all the safety data as it comes in and provides regular safety updates. If a safety issue is detected, immediate action will take place to determine if the issue is related to the COVID-19 vaccine and determine the best course of action.

## Should pregnant and post-partum breastfeeding women receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

We do not have the data to assess safety in these individuals. Certainly there is no reason to think immunizing breastfeeding women will have any harm to the neonate. We do not know the effect of immunization on pregnant women. There is no theoretical contraindication to the use of this vaccine in pregnancy. We do know that pregnant women are at higher risk of becoming seriously ill with COVID-19. **Each woman will need to make this decision in consultation with their health care provider.**

## After I receive the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, will I be immune to the virus?

The data show that after the second dose, there is a 95% efficacy in the prevention of infection. We do not know how long this immunity lasts.

**If I'm experiencing any flu-like symptoms the day of my clinic appointment, is it ok to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Connecticut Children's would not recommend the vaccine if you are ill at the time of immunization.

**I saw on the news recently that a COVID-19 mutation has been identified in the UK. Will the vaccine still be effective?**

All coronaviruses, including COVID-19, will tend to mutate and evolve over time. This just means that the genetic blueprint, or genome, of the virus is changing. However, the UK mutation appears to be associated with contagiousness and there is currently no data showing that the vaccine will have decreased efficacy against this strain.