

COVID-19 Vaccines: What You Need to Know

Many people have questions about the COVID-19 vaccines. This document contains information to help you decide whether to get vaccinated. For more information, visit nyc.gov/covidvaccine.

How to Get a COVID-19 Vaccine in New York City

The COVID-19 vaccines are available to anyone age 12 and older at no cost. Visit nyc.gov/vaccinefinder to find a vaccine site. You can search for sites by vaccine brand and for sites where no appointment is needed. Call 877-VAX-4NYC (877-829-4692) for help getting vaccinated at home or at a City-run site. You can also fill out the form at nyc.gov/homevaccine to get vaccinated at home.

When you get vaccinated, you need to show a document that has your date of birth. You do not need to provide a Social Security number or proof of residency or immigration status.

What Are the Benefits of Getting Vaccinated?

Getting vaccinated protects you from getting very sick or dying from COVID-19. The vaccines protect against current variants of the virus, including the more contagious delta variant. More than 33,000 New Yorkers and 600,000 people in the U.S. have died due to COVID-19, including children, young adults and people who had no other health issues. Experts estimate that COVID-19 vaccines have already prevented thousands of hospitalizations and deaths in NYC alone.

Getting vaccinated protects the people around you by reducing your chance of getting COVID-19 and giving it to your family, friends and community.

Getting vaccinated allows you to be around others more safely. Once fully vaccinated, you can do some activities without wearing a face mask or practicing physical distancing, especially when you are with other people who are fully vaccinated.

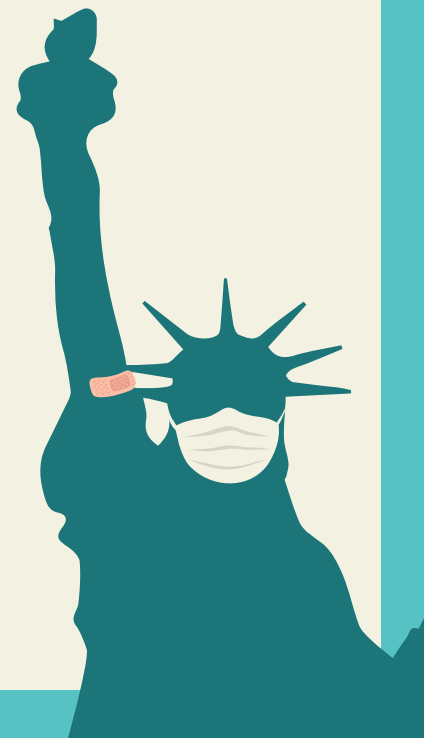
Vaccination can help end the COVID-19 pandemic. Vaccines have helped reduce or even eliminate diseases, like polio and smallpox. Vaccination is our best chance at returning to the activities we enjoyed before COVID-19.

What If I Already Had COVID-19?

People can get COVID-19 more than once. If you had COVID-19 before, getting vaccinated strengthens the protection your body has against the virus and also protects against the delta variant and other variants.

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Is There Still a Risk of Getting COVID-19 After Vaccination?

People who are vaccinated can still get COVID-19 but have a much lower risk of getting COVID-19 than people who are not vaccinated. They also have a much lower risk of severe illness, hospitalization and death from COVID-19.

What Are the Differences Between the COVID-19 Vaccines?

There are three safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines available in the U.S.:

- The **Pfizer-BioNTech** vaccine is an mRNA vaccine given as two doses 21 days apart to people age 12 and older.
 - The **Moderna** vaccine is an mRNA vaccine given as two doses 28 days apart to people age 18 and older.
 - The **Johnson & Johnson/Janssen** vaccine is an adenovirus vector vaccine given as one dose to people age 18 and older.
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How Do the COVID-19 Vaccines Work?

The vaccines teach your body to recognize COVID-19 so that if you are exposed to the virus, your immune system can fight it. The vaccines do not contain the virus that causes COVID-19 and cannot give you COVID-19.

To learn more, visit on.nyc.gov/vaccinefacts to find these resources:

- How the mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines Work: on.nyc.gov/mrna-vaccines
 - How the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 Vaccine Works: on.nyc.gov/johnson-vaccine
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How Do We Know the COVID-19 Vaccines Are Effective?

The vaccines were tested in clinical trials with tens of thousands of people of different ages, races and ethnicities. About half of the participants received a vaccine and half did not. The people who received a vaccine were less likely to get sick, be hospitalized or die from COVID-19 than those who did not receive a vaccine. Hundreds of millions of doses of vaccines have been given safely in the U.S. Currently, most people who are hospitalized or die from the virus are not vaccinated.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized the vaccines for emergency use after data showed the benefits of getting a vaccine outweighed the risks. Now, over 200 million people in the U.S. have received a vaccine. Most people who are hospitalized or die from COVID-19 are not vaccinated.

How Do We Know the Vaccines Are Safe?

Clinical trials did not find any serious safety concerns with the vaccines. Now that the vaccines are authorized or approved for use, their safety is strictly monitored through systems including the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). Health care providers must report certain

serious health events after vaccination to this system. Members of the public can report to VAERS too. Experts review the reports for patterns of health events, then look into whether the events are connected to a vaccine.

What Are the Vaccine Side Effects?

Common side effects include arm soreness, fever, chills, tiredness, headache or body aches. These are normal signs your body is building protection. Symptoms may start within three days of vaccination (the day after is most common) and usually go away within a day or two.

Serious side effects from vaccines typically show up within a few days. Reactions after two months are very unlikely. Three serious side effects have been identified, and all are very rare. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other experts continue to recommend COVID-19 vaccination for everyone age 12 and older given the low risk of serious side effects and much higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19.

Heart inflammation: Inflammation of the heart (myocarditis) and surrounding tissue (pericarditis) have been reported in a small number of people who received the Pfizer vaccine or Moderna vaccine. Most cases have occurred in adolescent boys and young adults, are mild and improve with treatment and rest.

Blood clots: There is a small risk of a rare type of blood clot with low blood platelet count in people who get the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. This condition is called thrombosis with thrombocytopenia (TTS). TTS following vaccination has occurred mainly in women younger than age 50, but also in men and older women.

Guillain-Barré syndrome: A small number of people who got the Johnson & Johnson vaccine have developed this syndrome, which can cause muscle weakness, nerve damage and sometimes paralysis. Most people recover fully, but some have permanent damage.

Can People With Allergies Get Vaccinated?

Talk to your health care provider **before** getting vaccinated if you have ever had a severe or immediate allergic reaction to:

- A COVID-19 vaccine or any of its ingredients
- Any other vaccine or injectable medicine

If you have any other allergies, you can get a COVID-19 vaccine without checking with your health care provider.

Can People With Other Health Conditions Get Vaccinated?

People with serious medical conditions can get vaccinated. Getting vaccinated is even more important if you have a condition that increases your risk for severe COVID-19 illness, such as diabetes, asthma, heart disease, obesity or HIV. Many clinical trials participants had underlying medical conditions and the vaccines were safe and effective for them. To learn more, read [Who Can Receive a COVID-19 Vaccine at **on.nyc.gov/receive-vaccine**](https://on.nyc.gov/receive-vaccine).

What if I Do Not Trust the Government or Medical System?

There is a long history of governments and medical systems providing poor treatment to or even experimenting on people who are Black, Indigenous or Latino. However, with COVID-19 vaccines, clinical studies show that they are safe and effective for people of different ages, races and ethnicities. Black and Latino people have also been more likely to get very sick and die from COVID-19 due to long-standing inequities. To prevent further injustice, we must make sure everyone has access to lifesaving COVID-19 vaccines and accurate information about the vaccines.

What if I Am Not Ready to Get Vaccinated Right Now?

If you are still deciding whether to get vaccinated, you can talk to people you know who have received a vaccine or who got sick with COVID-19. Get reliable information from your provider or other experts, such as the CDC at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

Additional Concerns

I am concerned about missing work to get vaccines or because of vaccine side effects. In New York State, employers are required to give employees paid time off to get vaccinated. People can also use their sick leave to recover from any side effects after vaccination.

I am concerned because I am pregnant, want to become pregnant or am breastfeeding. The CDC and other experts strongly recommend all people who are pregnant, want to become pregnant or are breastfeeding get a COVID-19 vaccine. If you are pregnant, a COVID-19 infection can be even more dangerous. There is no evidence the vaccines cause infertility.

If you are pregnant and get a fever after vaccination, take acetaminophen (Tylenol) to reduce the fever. Fever from any cause can be dangerous for a fetus.

There is no reason to believe vaccines affect the safety of breast milk. Studies show that people who received the Pfizer vaccine or Moderna vaccine can have COVID-19 antibodies in their breast milk. More research is needed to see if the antibodies help protect babies from COVID-19.

For more information, read Reproductive Health and COVID-19 Vaccines: Frequently Asked Questions at on.nyc.gov/reproductive-health-faq.

I am concerned about my children getting a COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccines prevent many diseases in children, including measles and polio, and now we have a vaccine to protect children ages 12 and older from COVID-19. Children can get sick from COVID-19 and develop health complications and long-term symptoms (known as **post-acute COVID-19 syndrome**, or long COVID). Vaccinating children helps reduce the severity of COVID-19 illness and spreading it to others. For more information, read Frequently Asked Questions About COVID-19 Vaccines for Families at on.nyc.gov/youth-vaccine.