



Maimonides
Medical Center

COVID-19 VACCINE FAQs

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General Information about the COVID-19 Vaccine

Q: What are the benefits of the COVID-19 vaccine? What does the vaccine do?

A: Because there is currently no cure for COVID-19, prevention is our best strategy. The development of COVID-19 vaccines is an important step in helping minimize the effects of this potentially deadly virus. Vaccines work by training your immune system to recognize and fight off the viruses and bacteria they target. By triggering an immune system response to a virus through a vaccine, your body is better equipped to destroy these disease-causing microbes in the future should you be exposed to COVID-19.

Q: Will the vaccine give me COVID-19?

A: No. None of the COVID-19 vaccines currently in development in the US, including the BioNTech/Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, use the live virus that causes COVID-19. After receiving the vaccine, you may experience symptoms such as arm pain, low-grade fever, chills or fatigue. This is normal and symptoms will resolve without treatment.

Q: How long does the immunity last?

A: It is unknown at this time how long immunity will last; ongoing studies will help determine if repeat vaccination is needed and if it is, how often we may need a booster.

Q: If I wear a mask and social distance, do I need a vaccine?

A: Yes. Although mask wearing and social distancing are important to limit exposure to COVID-19, the vaccine will create immunity to COVID-19. The combination of getting vaccinated and following guidelines such as mask wearing, and social distancing offer the best protection for you and can help prevent spread to others.

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

A: Yes. Vaccinated individuals continue mask wearing protocols and other mitigation strategies for transmitting COVID-19.

Q: How was the COVID-19 vaccine developed so quickly?

A: Scientists began work on the COVID-19 vaccine nearly a year ago in January 2020. It is the U.S. vaccine safety system's job to make sure that all vaccines are as safe as possible. Safety has been a top priority while federal partners have worked to make COVID-19 vaccines available for use in the United States. The new COVID-19 vaccines have been evaluated in tens of thousands

of individuals, who volunteered to be vaccinated and to participate in clinical trials. The information from these clinical trials allowed the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to determine the safety and effectiveness of the vaccines. These clinical trials were conducted according to rigorous standards set forth by FDA. FDA has determined that the newly authorized COVID-19 vaccines meet its safety and effectiveness standards. Therefore, FDA has made these vaccines available for use in the United States under what is known as an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA).

[Q: What is Emergency Use Authorization \(EUA\)?](#)

A: The FDA can issue an EUA during a public health emergency—like a pandemic—to allow the use of unapproved medical products to diagnose, treat or prevent serious or life-threatening diseases. If there’s evidence that strongly suggests that patients have benefited from a treatment or test, the FDA can issue an EUA to make it available to the public. Safety and efficacy must be demonstrated, and certain FDA criteria must be met prior to issuing the EUA, including that there are no adequate, approved and available alternatives. The EUA was issued, because longer term follow-up is needed for formal FDA approval, which will likely occur after six months of observation.

[Q: Does it matter which vaccine I receive?](#)

A: The safety and efficacy can vary by vaccine. The BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine and the Moderna vaccine have excellent safety and efficacy profiles. All vaccines undergo the same stringent review processes, regardless of manufacturer. FDA approval or EUA means the agency has determined, based on rigorous review and evidence, that the vaccine is safe and effective for intended use.

[Q: Which vaccine is Maimonides offering?](#)

A: Maimonides will begin by offering the Pfizer vaccine because the Pfizer vaccine is the first of the COVID-19 vaccines to receive FDA Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). It is expected that the Moderna vaccine will also be granted FDA EUA in December. At that time, we will begin to receive vaccine shipments from Moderna, in addition to Pfizer.

[Q: Can I get the vaccine if I’m not feeling well?](#)

A: If you aren’t feeling well, it is recommended that you wait until you’re feeling better to get the vaccine.

Q: What are the possible side effects and for how long could they last?

A: With this vaccine, some people may experience more symptoms compared to prior vaccinations, such as with flu shot. The booster shot can produce symptoms more severe than experienced with the first dose. This is normal and not serious and will resolve with time.

The most common side effect is muscle soreness or aching in the arm, which will resolve without treatment. Other common side effects after vaccination may include:

- Swelling or redness where the vaccine was administered
- Low-grade fever
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle and joint aches elsewhere

If you have side effects following vaccination, you can take steps to help you feel better.

For fever:

- Drink lots of water
- If your doctor approves, you can take an over-the-counter fever reducer

For injection site or arm pain:

- Put a cold pack or ice in a clean, wet washcloth and place it where you're sore; use for 20 minutes as needed
- Try moving your arm around — it can help with pain and swelling
- If your doctor approves, you can take an over-the-counter pain reliever

If you are experiencing symptoms more serious than those described, please contact your personal physician.

Q: How long after receiving the first vaccine must I receive the second vaccine?

A: Three weeks.

Q: What happens if I don't get the second vaccine three weeks after the first?

A: Highest immunity through the vaccine is achieved one week after receiving the second dose of vaccine. The duration of immunity at this time is unknown. If you miss the second dose, it has not yet been determined how long you might need to wait before you need to start the series of the vaccine again. If you miss the second dose, contact your personal physician to discuss vaccination options (e.g., if you are late by a few weeks, it is best to proceed with the second dose as planned).

Q: What will happen to me if I don't get the second vaccine at all?

A: Receiving two doses of the mRNA COVID-19 vaccine is the only way to create an effective antibody response and protect you from COVID-19. Highest immunity through the vaccine is achieved one week after receiving the second dose. The duration of immunity at this time is unknown. It is important that you receive the same vaccine for both doses; receiving one dose of the Pfizer vaccine and one dose of Moderna, for example, has not been studied.

Additional Resources

- Learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine on the [CDC website](#).
- Learn how, with oversight and regulation, the FDA ensures vaccine quality, safety and effectiveness while helping to facilitate the timely development of COVID-19 vaccines on the [FDA website](#).
- Learn how the CDC is making vaccine recommendations on the [CDC website](#).