

COVID-19 Vaccine FAQs

Answering your questions
regarding the vaccine.



How do the COVID-19 vaccines work?

Pfizer and Moderna, use messenger RNA (mRNA), to trigger the immune system to produce protective antibodies against the coronavirus. These are the first vaccines to use mRNA. It is important to note that neither of these vaccines uses the coronavirus itself, and neither can cause COVID-19.

Johnson & Johnson (J&J)/Janssen contains a vector virus that delivers information to cells in the body to create an immune response. This vector virus is a modified virus that is not the virus that causes COVID-19 and cannot reproduce itself, so it cannot cause COVID-19.

Are the COVID-19 Vaccines Safe?

We are confident the vaccines approved for use in the U.S. (Pfizer, Moderna, and J&J/Janssen) are highly safe and effective. All were developed in the U.S. and have undergone U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) scrutiny, the most rigorous vaccine approval process on the planet.

Like other medications, the COVID-19 vaccines can have some side effects. All symptoms experienced by trial participants were mild or moderate and were attributable to a normal, healthy immune response. The most commonly reported side effects of the vaccine were arm pain, fatigue, muscle or joint pain, and headache. None were severe nor required hospitalization.

Please note, in most situations, Pfizer and Moderna are preferred over J&J/Janssen by the CDC unless you have an allergy to an ingredient or severe reaction after a mRNA vaccine dose. When considering the J&J/Janssen vaccine, women 30-49 years, especially, should be aware of the increased risk of thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS), which is a **rare** but serious adverse event that causes blood clots in large blood vessels and low platelets (blood cells that help form clots).

How do vaccines protect our community?

If 75 to 95 percent of the population is vaccinated, vaccines will not only protect people who get the vaccine, they'll protect people who have not been vaccinated by reducing the rate of person-to-person transmission (herd immunity).

Vaccination has led to community protection from other illnesses, including whooping cough/pertussis.

Are the COVID-19 vaccines effective?

Both the Pfizer and Moderna mRNA vaccines are over 94 percent effective, a calculation based on observed infection rates among unvaccinated (placebo) adult participants compared to vaccinated participants in each clinical trial. Efficacy was consistent across age (18+), gender, race and ethnicity demographics.

The J&J/Janssen vaccine was 66 percent effective in clinical trials at preventing COVID-19 infection.



Will I need to get a COVID-19 vaccine every year?

While COVID-19 vaccines are effective, studies have shown some declines in vaccine effectiveness against infections over time. At this time, it is advised that everyone 12 years and older get a booster shot at least 5 months after completing your primary COVID-19 vaccine series. Adults 18 years and older who received J&J/Janssen as their primary COVID-19 vaccine should get a booster at least 2 months after receiving their J&J/Janssen vaccine.

Which booster should I get?

Teens 12-17 years old may only get a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine booster.

Adults 18 years and older who received Pfizer, Moderna, or J&J/Janssen as their primary COVID-19 vaccine can get Pfizer, Moderna, or J&J/Janssen for their booster.

According to the CDC, it is safe to get a booster shot that is different from the vaccine you initially received. However, the Pfizer and Moderna mRNA vaccines are preferred over J&J/Janssen for primary and booster vaccination in most situations due to the risk of serious adverse events. If you have had an allergic reaction to the mRNA vaccines, have limited access to the mRNA vaccines, or want the J&J/Janssen vaccine despite safety concerns, the J&J/Janssen vaccine may still be received.

How is the vaccine administered?

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require two doses, either 21 or 28 days apart. Protection is incomplete unless two doses of the vaccine are administered. You are considered fully vaccinated 2 weeks after your second shot in a 2-dose series, or 2 weeks after a single-shot J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine.

Will I need to continue to wear a mask and social distance after I receive a vaccine?

Yes. The CDC recommends everyone wear a mask regardless of vaccination or booster status. Masking is a critical public health tool for preventing spread of COVID-19. It is important for everyone to continue using all tools available to us to help stop this pandemic: getting vaccinated as soon as possible, getting a booster when it is time, covering your mouth and nose with a mask, washing hands often, and staying at least 6 feet away from others. This will offer the best protection from getting and spreading COVID-19.



Can pregnant or nursing women and women trying to conceive be vaccinated?

Yes. The CDC recommends people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, trying to get pregnant now, or might become pregnant in the future get vaccinated. People who are pregnant may also receive a COVID-19 vaccine booster shot.

Both the FDA and ACOG (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists) say the vaccine is safe for pregnant women, nursing moms, and those trying to get pregnant.

Can children be vaccinated?

As of January 2022, the Pfizer vaccine is the **only** approved vaccine in the U.S. for children and adolescents 5–17 years of age. We are confident that the Pfizer vaccine is highly safe and effective in this age group. It was developed in the U.S. and has undergone the same U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) scrutiny as all vaccines do, which is the most rigorous vaccine approval process on the planet.

It is important to note that 5–11 year olds receive one-third of the dosage of the adolescent/adult vaccine. ***It is not yet approved for children under 5 years old.***

A booster dose for 5–11 year old children has not yet been approved. However, 5–11 year olds who are immune compromised may receive a booster 28 days after their second shot.

What are the Side Effects of the COVID-19 Vaccine in Children?

Like other medications, the COVID-19 vaccines can have some side effects. All symptoms experienced by trial participants were mild or moderate and were attributable to a normal, healthy immune response. The most commonly reported side effects were fever, fatigue, chills, muscle or joint pain, and headache. None were severe nor required hospitalization.

It's important to note that there were no cases of myocarditis in the children's trial. The risk for developing myocarditis is rare and the cases of myocarditis is more commonly seen in younger men between the ages of 16-30 years, and typically after the second dose. You can develop myocarditis after developing COVID-19 as a complication, and the myocarditis from COVID-19 is usually quite severe. However, the rare cases of myocarditis seen in younger men after vaccine is generally mild and usually easily treated once it's recognized.

How much will the vaccine cost?

According to the CDC, the federal government purchased hundreds of millions of vaccine doses with taxpayer money, so the vaccine, itself, will be given to Americans at no cost. Vaccine providers will be able to charge a fee to administer the shot, but this fee should be covered by public or private insurance, or by a government relief fund for the uninsured.



If I have already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine?

According to CDC, vaccination should be offered regardless of whether you have had a COVID-19 infection. Current recommendation is to give anyone recovered from Covid-19 the vaccine.

How do I get the vaccine?

Vaccines are widely available in the U.S.

The Branch-Hillsdale- St Joseph Community Health Agency is currently giving primary series of Pfizer, Moderna, and J&J/Janssen, 3rd dose (for immune compromised), pediatric, and booster doses.

You can walk-in or schedule an appointment, depending on the location. Check out our website (bhsj.org) to see the location closest to you!