

# Should I take the COVID-19 Vaccine?

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## Why should I get vaccinated?

Two key reasons to get vaccinated are to protect ourselves and to protect those around us. Because not everyone can be vaccinated – including very young babies, those who are seriously ill or have certain allergies – they depend on others being vaccinated to ensure they are also safe from vaccine-preventable diseases.

## Why is a COVID-19 vaccine needed if we can do other things, such as social distancing and wearing a mask, to prevent catching the disease?

Stopping a pandemic requires using all available tools. Vaccines work with your immune system so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. Other steps, like covering your mouth and nose with a mask and washing your hands, and avoiding crowded spaces with poor ventilation, help reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus or spreading it to others. Together, COVID-19 vaccination and following CDC's recommendations to protect yourself and others will offer the best protection from COVID-19.

## Will I need to keep wearing a mask and avoid close contact with others if I have received 2 doses of the vaccine?

Yes, masking is still recommended for those individuals who are vaccinated, particularly in high transmission areas. While the vaccine greatly decreases the risk that you will get seriously ill from COVID, it can still on rare cases lead to a mild case of infection. In those cases, it may still be possible to transmit the disease to others. Therefore, the CDC has recommended that in public indoor settings, masking is still recommended.

## Are there other vaccines that help prevent me from getting COVID-19?

There are currently no available vaccines that will prevent COVID-19. A flu vaccine will not protect you from getting COVID-19, but it can prevent you from getting influenza (flu) at the same time as COVID-19. This can keep you from having a more severe illness.

## Does immunity after getting COVID-19 last longer than protection from COVID-19 vaccines?

The protection someone gains from having an infection (called natural immunity) varies depending on the disease, and it varies from person to person. Since this virus is new, we don't know how long natural immunity might last. Some early evidence—based on some studies— seems to suggest that natural immunity may not last very long, possibly only 6 months. Both natural immunity and vaccine-induced immunity are important aspects of COVID-19 that experts are trying to learn more about. Current studies suggest COVID-19 vaccines produce consistent antibody levels for at least 6-8 months, if not longer. Vaccination is important even in individuals who have already been infected with COVID-19 because vaccination can enhance your immune response and resistance to future COVID-19 (and COVID-19 variant) infection. Future studies will monitor long-term vaccine-induced immune responses.

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## Are there any side effects to the vaccine?

The COVID-19 vaccines are safe and tolerable. Like any medication, vaccines can cause side effects. Usually vaccine side effects are minor (for example, fatigue, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, a sore arm where a shot was given or a low-grade fever after a vaccine) and go away on their own within a few days. Minor side effects may be more common in individuals less than 55 years of age. If your side effects worsen or do not go away in a couple of days, notify your provider. If you have a medical condition that may affect your decision, please have a discussion with your health care provider to assure you make the most effective and safe decision.

## When should I not take the vaccine?

Individuals who have underlying medical conditions may still receive the COVID-19 mRNA vaccines as long as they have no contraindications to vaccination such as a history of immediate or severe allergic reaction to the COVID-19 vaccine or its ingredients. It is important to speak with your provider if you think you may have a contraindication to the available vaccines.

## If you have other questions or are in doubt...

If you have any concerns, speak with your provider.

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