

# YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE COVID-19 VACCINES, ANSWERED

In the face of COVID-19, every question, answer and vaccination is important. That's why we're addressing uncertainties you may have about receiving a COVID-19 vaccine with facts from the CDC to help alleviate your concerns and arm you with information. Because we know every chance to keep our future safe and healthy is crucial.



The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has moved the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine from Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) to approved for use in individuals 16 and older. The vaccine will now be marketed as Comirnaty (koe-mir'-na-tee). It is still available under emergency use authorization for individuals 12 through 15 years of age and as a third dose in certain immunocompromised individuals.

## **Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccine?**

No. You have to be exposed to the novel coronavirus to get COVID-19. The currently authorized vaccines teach our immune systems how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19.

## **I've already had COVID-19. Do I still need to get vaccinated?**

Health experts recommend the COVID-19 vaccine even for people who have had a COVID-19 infection. Although infection likely provides some immunity to reinfection, we don't know yet how long natural immunity lasts. So, it's important to still get vaccinated even if you've had COVID-19 to reduce the risk of reinfection—to protect yourself and others around you.

## **Once I receive the COVID-19 vaccine, will I be immune for life, or will I need to receive future COVID-19 vaccinations?**

At this time, it's still unknown how long immunity from the COVID-19 vaccine will last and whether it will need to be administered more than once, or even on a regular basis, like the flu shot.

## **Will a COVID-19 vaccine alter my DNA?**

The COVID-19 vaccine will not alter your DNA, and none of the authorized vaccines interact with your DNA. The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines; they contain a bit of RNA (ribonucleic acid) that teaches the cells of the body how to make a protein that causes the immune system to make COVID-19 antibodies. The Janssen COVID-19 vaccine (Johnson & Johnson) is a viral vector vaccine that uses a modified version of a different virus (the vector) to deliver important instructions to our cells that trigger our immune system to begin producing antibodies and activating other immune cells to fight off what it thinks is an infection. At the end of the process, our bodies have learned how to protect us against future infection with the virus that causes COVID-19. Viral vectors cannot cause infection with the virus used as the vaccine vector.

## **Will the vaccine work for everyone?**

The COVID-19 vaccines currently available were proven to be highly effective across diverse races and genders. So, across the U.S., every family and neighborhood can expect the same effectiveness and protection.

### How many doses will I need?

The CDC continues to provide updates [here](#) on authorized and recommended vaccines to prevent COVID-19, including their dosage information. You can click on each vaccine to learn general information about each vaccine.

### It seems like the vaccine was authorized quickly. Is it safe?

COVID-19 vaccines have gone through a rigorous safety assessment before being authorized for use in the U.S. by the FDA. The unprecedented speed of the COVID-19 vaccines was due to multiple factors, including past research into these types of vaccines. COVID-19 is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Research was already underway to prevent past coronavirus diseases such as SARS and MERS and that experience helped jumpstart work on our current vaccines.

### If I get the vaccine, are there any side effects?

After vaccination, some people may develop a fever, muscle aches, headache, and/or fatigue. These side effects are related to the activation of the immune system. In most persons they last 1-2 days and don't require treatment.

### If I am allergic to eggs, should I still get the COVID-19 vaccine?

The current COVID-19 vaccines do not contain eggs or any animal products. However, those with a history of severe allergic reactions to eggs or any other substance (i.e., anaphylaxis) are encouraged to remain after vaccination for 30 minutes for observation. You should alert the vaccination team when you go for your appointment.

### Are the ingredients safe?

Yes, the currently authorized vaccines were shown to be very safe in large studies. Researchers have studied vaccines for decades and they've found that our bodies recognize parts of the virus (not live virus), and then can build a response (antibody) to protect us from the disease. This means the vaccine helps our bodies remember how to fight the virus if we're infected in the future.

### Will the COVID-19 vaccine cause infertility?

The COVID-19 vaccine, like other vaccines, works by training our bodies to develop antibodies to fight against the virus that causes COVID-19, to prevent future illness. There is currently no evidence that antibodies formed from COVID-19 vaccines cause any problems with pregnancy. In addition, there is no evidence suggesting that fertility problems are a side effect of ANY vaccine. COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for all people aged 12 years and older, including people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, trying to get pregnant now, or might become pregnant in the future. Consult with your fertility or pregnancy care team if you have additional questions. You can also learn more [here](#).

### Why do I have to wear a mask even after getting the vaccine?

The current vaccines protect against severe illness and death from COVID-19. It takes several weeks for the full effect of the vaccines to develop and provide you protection from illness. In addition, we only have early information on whether the vaccines prevent virus transmission from person to person.

### Why do I need the vaccine if everyone around me is getting it?

Herd immunity and community protection is the ultimate goal, right? Yes, but that's achieved when a large portion of our entire population has been vaccinated. Current estimates are that at least 85% of our population will need to be vaccinated for COVID-19. Many adults have medical conditions that will prevent them from getting the vaccine even if they want it. So, it's up to us to keep them protected by doing our part and getting the vaccine for them.

### Is the vaccine free?

The COVID-19 vaccine will be available at no cost for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City (Blue KC) members. Don't forget to bring your member ID card when you go to get your vaccine.

For more information about COVID-19 please visit [bluekc.com/covid-19](https://bluekc.com/covid-19) as well as [cdc.gov/COVID19](https://cdc.gov/COVID19). You can also contact your local health department for additional COVID-19 vaccine information.