



*This has been a stressful a time for many people, but the new vaccine is an exciting step in our fight against COVID-19 and in returning to a more normal way of life. It is natural that people have questions about any new medication or treatment. In the age of social media, it is easy for false information to spread quickly. Here are some facts from Tufts Medical Center's Infectious Diseases doctors:*

**1. How do the current COVID-19 vaccines work?**

The active ingredient in the vaccine has instructions for your cells on how to make a piece of the “spike protein” that is unique to the virus that causes COVID-19. The “spike protein” makes your immune system “think” your body has the disease even though it really doesn’t. This causes the immune system to produce antibodies and protect you from the real virus if you are exposed.

**2. Do I need to receive both doses of the vaccine for it to be most effective?**

Yes. The COVID-19 vaccines currently available (Pfizer and Moderna) are given to people in two doses, 21 (Pfizer) or 28 (Moderna) days apart. The effectiveness of the vaccines has only been studied after two doses.

**3. Can I get COVID-19 disease from the vaccine?**

No. You cannot develop COVID-19 disease from the vaccine.

**4. Is it safe to get the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Yes, the COVID-19 vaccines available (Pfizer and Moderna) have been thoroughly tested as part of clinical trials. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and a group of vaccine experts from throughout the country carefully reviewed information. The FDA then decided it was safe to make the Moderna vaccines available to persons aged 18 years and older. The Pfizer vaccine can be used in people 16 and older.

**5. This vaccine was developed so quickly; are we sure it is safe?**

The FDA's review of the vaccines was thorough and rigorous, and no steps were skipped in the process to review the safety of the vaccines. The FDA decided that the vaccine met safety and efficacy standards based on the currently available data from more than 43,000 diverse volunteers, and it was felt the benefits of the vaccine outweighed any side effects.

**6. I heard there were side effects after people received the vaccine. What do we know about that?**

The most commonly reported side effects are soreness at the site of the injection as well as flu-like symptoms, including fatigue, body aches, chills or fevers after the vaccine. Side effects were most common after the second dose of the vaccine, and more likely to be experienced by younger people. These symptoms go away within the first few days after receiving the vaccine. The side effects tell us that the body is building protection against the virus.

**7. What about allergic reactions due to the vaccine?**

To date, people who have had allergic reactions to the vaccine have all recovered quickly. This risk of allergic reaction is very small and is similar to the risk of allergic reaction associated with all medications and vaccines.

**8. Do you need to take a COVID-19 test before receiving the vaccine?**

Because it is safe to receive the vaccine even if you have active or recent COVID-19, you do not need to take a test. However, if you know that you have active COVID-19, we ask that you delay your vaccination until you are released from isolation, so that you are no longer contagious to others.

**9. If I test positive for COVID-19 between dose 1 and dose 2, should I still get dose 2?**

Yes. We simply ask that you delay your vaccination until you are released from isolation, so that you are no longer contagious to others. Please schedule dose 2 for as soon as possible after your release from isolation.

**10. Can I get the COVID-19 vaccine if I am pregnant?**

Yes. Pregnant individuals are at a higher risk of getting severe COVID-19. For this reason, the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine and American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists strongly recommends that pregnant individuals have access to COVID-19 vaccines and that each person has a discussion with their health care professional about their own personal choice. For more information about COVID-19 vaccines and pregnancy, go to [tuftsmedicalcenter.org/covidvaccinepregnancy](https://tuftsmedicalcenter.org/covidvaccinepregnancy).

**11. Can I receive the vaccine if I am breastfeeding?**

Yes. The Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine reports that there is no reason to believe that the vaccine affects the safety of breastmilk. For more information, go to [tuftsmedicalcenter.org/covidvaccinepregnancy](https://tuftsmedicalcenter.org/covidvaccinepregnancy).

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**12. Do both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines carry the same precaution/allergy statements?**

Yes. Both vaccines are not recommended for persons with history of severe allergic reaction (e.g. anaphylaxis) to any component of the vaccine, any persons with a history of immediate allergic reaction to any mRNA vaccine, and a history of immediate allergic reaction to polysorbate. If you have had an immediate allergic reaction to polyethylene glycol (PEG, a component of the vaccines) or polysorbate (chemically related to PEG), the CDC recommends an evaluation by an allergist/immunologist to determine if you can receive the vaccine safely.

CDC considers a history of immediate allergic reaction to another vaccine or injectable therapy, or a history of anaphylaxis due to any cause to be a precaution. People who have these reactions should be observed for 30 minutes (rather than 15) after each dose of vaccine.

Allergic reactions (including severe allergic reactions) not related to vaccines or injectable therapies (e.g., food, pet, venom, environmental or latex allergies; oral medications [including the oral equivalents of injectable medications]) are not a contraindication or precaution to vaccination with mRNA COVID-19 vaccines. For more information, see CDC [Vaccines & Immunizations \(https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html).

**13. Can I take the vaccine if I already take other oral medications (anti-anxiety/depression/home medications and antibiotics)?**

At this time, there are no known reactions or interactions between oral medications and the vaccines.

**14. When I get the vaccine, do I need to continue wearing masks, social distancing, etc.?**

Yes. While we know the vaccine prevents you from getting COVID-19 disease, we are not sure yet to what extent it prevents the spreading of the virus that causes COVID-19. For this reason, even after you receive the vaccine, you should continue social distancing, wearing masks in public and following other [CDC guidelines \(https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html) to reduce risk of transmission.

**15. If I still have to do all those things after I receive the vaccine, why should I get it then?**

Ending a pandemic requires using all the tools we have available. Together, the vaccine and these recommendations give us the best chance of protecting ourselves and others from COVID-19 and helping to slow its spread in our communities.

**16. I know health care workers are the first to get the vaccine. When will it be available to people in the community?**

The Massachusetts Department of Health is developing a plan to vaccinate everyone in the state who wants to be vaccinated. Doing so will take several months. They have prioritized certain groups including health care workers, first responders, those over 75, etc. To see the state's latest timeline, go here ([mass.gov/covidvaccine](https://mass.gov/covidvaccine)).

**17. Is the vaccine really helpful? I heard that you can develop immunity by getting COVID-19, so why do I need to get my immunity through a vaccine?**

While some patients with COVID-19 have mild disease, others can become seriously ill. Those who develop mild disease may unknowingly pass it to someone who will develop severe disease. To date, COVID-19 has been responsible for more than 360,000 deaths in the United States. While people are immune after having COVID-19, we don't know how long a person is immune. Because of this, a vaccine is the safer choice for developing immunity.

**18. I saw information on Facebook/Twitter/Instagram that made me nervous about the vaccine. Where can I find the most accurate information?**

Social media can easily and quickly spread information, including false information. It is always important to check the source of information. The CDC has provided excellent and trusted resources for questions about the current COVID-19 vaccines at <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html>; information from the FDA in multiple languages can be found at <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/pfizer-biontech-covid-19-vaccine#additional> (Pfizer), <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/moderna-covid-19-vaccine> (Moderna) and is also very helpful. Your doctor can also talk to you more about the vaccine.

**19. Are we allowed to travel internationally after receiving the vaccine?**

There are no differences in travel guidelines or restrictions based on vaccine status.

Please check the latest at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-travel-order> from the state.

**20. When will we know if the vaccines protect people from spreading the virus?**

So far, studies show that the vaccines prevent COVID-19 illness. The Moderna trial data show a hint of decreasing asymptomatic infection, but we need more data. For this reason, even after vaccination everyone should continue to wear masks, social distance and follow [CDC guidelines \(https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html) until we have more information.