

COVID-19 FAQs

What COVID-19 vaccines are available?

In the United States, there are currently three vaccines to prevent COVID-19. The Pfizer-BioNTech [COVID-19 Vaccine \(now called Comirnaty\)](#) is [fully approved by the FDA and the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\)](#) for ages 16 and up. It is also approved for Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for those ages 12-15 and for those who are [immunocompromised](#).

Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson (J&J) /Janssen Biotech [vaccines are approved under EUA](#) for ages 18 and above.

I'm still not sure about getting vaccinated. Is it safe?

- The available vaccines are proven to be safe and effective.
- Although developed in record time, the available COVID-19 vaccines have gone through the same rigorous FDA process as every other vaccine, meeting all safety standards. Some factors that accelerated approval were funding, prioritization in the FDA pipeline, and high volume of available clinical trial participants. **In other words, pharmaceutical manufacturers, clinicians, public health and governmental agencies were able to cut through the red tape that generally slows the development and approval process for vaccines.**
- Clinical trials were completed through the usual process. No steps were skipped.
- More severe reactions are extremely rare and can be treated. Out of an abundance of safety after receiving the vaccine, patients are asked to stay 15 to 30 minutes after getting a vaccine in order to be observed and provided treatment in the rare case it is needed. Those who experience uncomfortable symptoms within three weeks after vaccination should contact their health care provider.
- We encourage employees to talk with their health care provider if they have concerns.

Who is eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine and where are they administered?

Everyone 12 years of age and older is now eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccination. There are several ways you can look for vaccination providers near you.

- Visit vaccinate.virginia.gov. In some states, information may be limited while more vaccination providers and pharmacies are being added.
- **Text your zip code to 438829 or call 1-800-232-0233** to find vaccine locations near

- **Check your local pharmacy’s website to see if vaccination appointments are available.** Find out which pharmacies are participating in the [Federal Retail Pharmacy Program](#).
- **Contact your [state health department](#)** to find additional vaccination locations in the
- **Check your local news** They may have information on how to get a vaccination appointment.
- Learn more at [COVID-19 Vaccination FAQs on Vaccines.gov](#).

Will approved COVID vaccines be covered under preventive services by Cigna plans at \$0 out-of-pocket cost?

Yes. If other services are provided at the time of vaccine administration, such as a chronic condition evaluation, then cost- share for these services may be applied.

Can you explain the difference between the vaccines and whether someone should choose one over the other? How will we know that a vaccine is both safe and effective?

The best vaccine choice is the vaccine available at the first available appointment. All three approved COVID-19 vaccines do an excellent job of preventing moderate to severe disease, hospitalizations and death. Long-term data is needed to learn how long the vaccines remain effective and what the impact of variants might be. People who feel uncomfortable symptoms within [three](#) weeks after getting a vaccination should contact their health care provider. Please refer to the [CDC website](#) for more details.

The most significant difference is that the J&J vaccine is one dose and the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are two doses.

How necessary is the vaccine for those ages 12 and up?

It is incredibly important that everyone 12 years of age and older receive a vaccine when available. CDC approved the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 12-15 under Emergency Use Authorization. The FDA and CDC/ACIP fully approved the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine (now called Comirnaty) for children ages 16 and up.

Though most children with COVID-19 have mild or no symptoms, some can get severely ill and require hospitalization. Some variants appear to be more contagious and affect children more than earlier ones. The Delta variant now accounts for more than 93 percent of COVID-19 cases, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said. Currently available vaccines still protect against known variants of concern. There are still unknowns regarding long-term effects of COVID-19 caused by inflammation that is often not apparent during the initial illness. The American Academy of Pediatrics and [CDC](#) now recommend that all children over age 2 wear masks when they return to school this year, regardless of vaccination status.

Parents with questions about the vaccine should talk with their child's health care provider. Experts believe vaccines could be available for children under 12 years old as early as September and as late as the first quarter of 2022, but clinical trials remain ongoing before data can be delivered to the FDA for EUA consideration. There are a number of excellent articles and guidance that can be found on the [American Academy of Pediatrics Healthy Children site](#). For more information, see the [CDC director statement about the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#), the [FDA decision to authorize emergency use of this vaccine in 12- through 15-year-old adolescents](#) or view CDC presentation slides [here](#).

Did COVID-19 clinical trials include diverse populations and were the outcomes or side effects different by race or gender?

Yes. Manufacturers provided demographic data for participants in their late-stage clinical trials. Similar vaccine efficacy and safety results were observed across racial and ethnic populations. For more information, see [kff.org](#).

If I am pregnant or breastfeeding, is it recommended that I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Any of the currently authorized COVID-19 vaccines can be offered to people who are pregnant or breastfeeding. On July 30, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (SMFM), the two leading organizations representing specialists in obstetric care, recommended that all pregnant individuals be vaccinated against COVID-19. If you have questions about getting vaccinated, a conversation with your health care provider might help, but may not be necessary.

According to the CDC, pregnant people are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Additionally, pregnant people with COVID-19 might be at increased risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes, such as preterm birth, compared with pregnant women without COVID-19. More information is available [here](#).

The Delta variant of COVID-19 poses a heightened risk of infection to everyone, particularly unvaccinated people, because it is more contagious.

A new [study](#), which comes from the [United Kingdom Obstetric Surveillance System](#), found that hospital admissions of pregnant women with COVID-19 are increasing amid the spread of the Delta variant in the United Kingdom and that their illness is more severe than it was in previous waves.

Will the current vaccines protect against emerging variants including Delta?

Each vaccine was designed using the original strain of the virus. Recent statements by both Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna suggest that their vaccines do protect against emerging strains. J&J/Janssen also conducted a subgroup analysis in the United States, South Africa, and Brazil showing efficacy rates as part of the EUA-approval process.

What are the rates of adverse events for COVID-19 vaccines? Should people with existing allergic reactions to foods or other vaccines receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

The CDC indicates that while some people don't have any side effects after getting a COVID-19 vaccine, many people will have mild side effects after vaccination. More severe reactions are extremely **rare** and can be treated. Patients are asked to stay for 15 to 30 minutes after getting a vaccine in order to be observed.

Common COVID-19 vaccine topics of concern

Concern	Fact*
Speed of development	The vaccines are proven safe and effective, and they were developed quickly because of the worldwide effort. Although developed in record time, they have gone through the same rigorous FDA process as every other vaccine, meeting all safety standards. No steps were skipped.
Impact of RNA	mRNA is simply a message that the body reads. It cannot change your DNA or modify your genes.
Ingredients	mRNA vaccines are free of preservatives and only contain the mRNA, a fatty coating layer to protect the mRNA, PEG (polyethylene glycol), and a combination of salts, sugar and water. Viral vector COVID-19 vaccines use a harmless version of a different virus, called a “vector,” to deliver information to the body that helps protect you.
Long-term data	Hundreds of millions have been vaccinated. Clinical trials have shown us the vaccines are safe, and now we are seeking long-term data to learn how long the vaccines remain effective.

*University of Waterloo School of Pharmacy and UC Davis Health, *Real Facts about Common COVID-19 Vaccine Myths*.

For information on the rare occurrence of adverse effects, [click here](#).