



Search has compiled this list of FAQs based on input gathered from the COVID-19 vaccine surveys circulated in December 2020. Thank you for your participation!

Q. Is a COVID-19 vaccine safe?

A. The U.S. vaccine safety system is a deliberate and multi-phase process to ensure all vaccines are as safe as possible. Safety is a top priority. Vaccine candidates conduct clinical trials with many thousands of study participants to generate scientific data and other information for the FDA to determine their safety and effectiveness. After evaluating this vaccine for safety and effectiveness, the FDA provided an Emergency Use Authorization, making the vaccine available for use in the U.S. As the vaccine is distributed and administered throughout the country, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is working with the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) to review data on efficacy, safety, and possible side effects to ensure continued safety monitoring is in place.

Q. When injected with the vaccine, are you injecting me with COVID-19?

A. No, you are not being injected with the virus that causes COVID-19. None of the early COVID-19 vaccines tested in the U.S. use a live virus that causes COVID-19. The goal for each vaccine is to teach our immune systems how to recognize and to fight the virus that causes COVID-19. At this time, the vaccines closest to receiving approval are mRNA - messenger ribonucleic acid - vaccines. Like other vaccines, mRNA vaccines work by training the immune system to recognize a virus threat and begin producing antibodies to protect itself.

Q. Do I need a vaccine if I have already had COVID-19?

A. Yes, people who have already had COVID-19 should plan to take the COVID-19 vaccine, because the science is currently inconclusive as to whether you will be naturally protected from a second COVID-19 infection in the future. The CDC currently suggests that if you were infected with COVID-19 during the previous 90 days, it is likely that you still have immune protection and that you may be asked to wait to receive your vaccine to allow others to be vaccinated first.

Q. Can the COVID-19 vaccine cause me to become infected or infect others?

A. No, you cannot become infected or infect others from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, because the vaccine contains no live virus. Instead, the vaccine directs your body to produce a protein that teaches your body how to fight off the virus.

Q. How long will it take for COVID-19 vaccines to take effect? Will I be protected from COVID-19 after the first dose of the vaccine?

A. The COVID-19 vaccine is expected to provide some protection a couple of weeks after the initial shot and reaches its greatest effectiveness approximately 4 weeks after the second shot. Although the first dose of vaccine offers some immunity, you will still be considered susceptible to COVID-19. It is very important to take the second shot within the recommended time period for maximum vaccine effectiveness.



Q. Does my family qualify for getting a vaccine?

A. At this time, no. Because the vaccine will be very limited when it first comes out, administration will be limited to those identified in prioritized (high-risk) groups by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the CDC. This is to ensure that all individuals in the high-risk groups are able to receive the vaccine. As more vaccine becomes available, those groups eligible to receive the vaccine will expand.

Q. Can I get a COVID-19 vaccine if I am pregnant?

A. Pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems were excluded from the COVID-19 vaccine trials, and so the currently available studies do not provide direct information about vaccine safety and effectiveness in these groups of people. The CDC recommends that those who are pregnant consult with their doctor before taking the vaccine.

Q. I have allergies. Is this vaccine safe for me?

A. While serious allergic reactions were not seen in vaccine clinical trials of thousands of patients, rare allergic reactions to vaccines are possible. If you have a history of serious allergic reactions, you should discuss your situation with your healthcare provider. The COVID-19 vaccine does not contain any animal products such as eggs.

Q. What are the side effects of this vaccine?

A. Some people may experience side effects, which are a part of the normal immune response to a vaccine. The majority of the side effects, while not seen in every individual, are signs that your body is recognizing the vaccine and mounting an immune response. Based on prior studies, side effects may include pain, redness and swelling at the site of the injection., fatigue, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, fever, nausea, malaise, and swollen lymph nodes.

These symptoms may occur within 2 days after the shot and last 1 to 2 days. Side effects may be more frequent after the 2nd shot (booster) and less frequent among older adults. Long-term side effects are unknown, although most vaccines do not have long-term side effects. Vaccine studies are ongoing and will continue to monitor and watch for adverse events.

Q. If I get the vaccine, can I quit wearing a mask?

A. **No.** While the COVID-19 vaccine is highly effective, it not 100% effective. Until the COVID-19 pandemic is controlled, people who receive the vaccine need to continue following Illinois Department of Public Health guidance such as the use of facemasks, social distancing, and regular hand washing. This protects you as well as your family and community.

Q: When will masking and social distancing be able to end, allowing us to get back to normal life?

A: Given the time it takes to get large quantities of the vaccine produced and distributed, we will need to continue our current mitigation practices for some time. It will remain important that vaccinated people continue to wear masks, practice social distancing and good hand hygiene to help prevent spread. Community infection rates will be continuously monitored and will be used to guide the decision process.

For more information on COVID-19 and the vaccine, please visit dhp.illinois.gov or cdc.gov.