

FAQ: COVID-19 Vaccines



The following is basic information concerning the vaccines for COVID-19.

How many vaccines for COVID-19 are there?

Currently, two vaccines have been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to help prevent COVID-19 infection. Other vaccines are in clinical trial phases.

Do both of these vaccines require two doses?

The two vaccines currently approved do require both an initial dose and a follow-up several weeks later in order to be effective.

Does the vaccine start working immediately after the first dose?

No. It takes a few days for the body's immune system to adapt to the dose and start providing protection. In addition, it is likely that the first dose will provide some degree of protection but not necessarily full protection against COVID-19.

What happens if a person only receives one dose?

At this point, there isn't enough data to forecast the effect of receiving only one of the two doses (and of course different people may have different experiences). It is likely that the protection against COVID-19 may not be full and/or may not last as long if a person receives only one dose.

Is a person protected as soon as they receive the second dose?

As with the first dose, it may take a few days for the body's immune system to fully adapt to the second dose. It's also important to remember that, although the vaccines have a very high effectiveness rate, they may not be 100% effective in every individual.

Can a person who has been vaccinated still pass on COVID-19 to another person?

At this point, it is not known for sure whether a person who is vaccinated might still be able to come into contact with COVID-19 and pass it on to another person. For that reason, people who are vaccinated should continue to follow safety measures (wearing a mask, practicing social distancing, etc.)

Does a person who has already had COVID-19 need to be vaccinated?

It is suggested that a person who has had COVID-19 already – and has recovered – receive a vaccine. It is possible to become reinfected and a vaccine decreases that likelihood. It's good to discuss this with a doctor to make sure a person meets the requirements for having recovered.

When can a person get the vaccine?

The vaccines are being offered in several phases, with the intention of making sure that those most in need of COVID-19 protection (elderly individuals, healthcare providers, etc.) receive it earlier. There are several recommended phases for “rolling out” the vaccine.

Are individuals with thalassemia listed among those who should receive the vaccine in one of the earlier phases?

At this time, thalassemia is not specifically listed as a condition that is recommended to receive the vaccine in the earlier Phase 1C. However, some individuals with thalassemia may have complications that are specified in the Phase 1C qualifications, such as heart conditions, chronic kidney disease, or diabetes, that may qualify them for inclusion in Phase 1C vaccination.

Also, each state has its own plan for distribution and may modify the recommendations as they feel are necessary to meet the needs of their citizens.

How does a person sign up to get the vaccine?

Because the vaccination plans may vary from state to state, a person should go to their state department of health website to see if there is information on signing up for the vaccine. (Links to state health departments can be found at

<https://www.cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/healthdirectories/healthdepartments.html>.)