



Updated 3/15/21. This update provides information on the three COVID-19 vaccines that are now authorized in the US. These vaccines are made by Moderna, Pfizer, and Janssen/Johnson & Johnson (J&J).

### 1. Why is vaccination important?

Vaccination is a safe and effective way to prevent disease. Vaccines save millions of lives each year. When we get vaccinated, we aren't just protecting ourselves, but also those around us. You can help stop the pandemic by getting a COVID-19 vaccine when one is available to you.

## GETTING THE VACCINE

### 2. Will I have to pay to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

No. If you have insurance, your doctor or pharmacy may charge your insurance company a fee for giving the vaccine. People without health insurance can get COVID-19 vaccines at no cost. There are no out-of-pocket payments for anyone.

### 3. Will I be asked about my immigration status when I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

No. COVID-19 vaccine is being given to Los Angeles County residents at no cost regardless of immigration status. You should not be asked about your immigration status when you get a COVID vaccine. Your medical information is private. Your doctor is not allowed to share it with immigration officials.

### 4. When can I get a vaccine?

The goal is for everyone to be able to get a COVID-19 vaccination easily as soon as large quantities of vaccine are available. While supplies are limited, vaccine is being offered to different groups of people at different times. Visit [VaccinateLACounty.com](https://www.vaccinatelacounty.com) to see which phase you are in, and when vaccines will be offered to each phase. You can also get updates by signing up for the Public Health COVID-19 vaccine email newsletter on this website.

### 5. Where is vaccine being given?

Public Health and county, city, community, and healthcare partners are working together to vaccinate to people in eligible groups at many different locations. Vaccines are available at over 600 vaccination sites throughout LA County.

These include:

- Large vaccination sites called PODs (Point of Dispensing Sites) or hubs
- Health clinics and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs)
- Pharmacies
- Some workplaces, including hospitals
- Some senior housing developments and senior centers
- Mobile vaccination units
- Skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) and long-term care facilities with congregate living, such as assisted living
- Special vaccination sites run by Public Health and county, city, community, and healthcare partners





## 6. How can I make an appointment?

Visit [VaccinateLACounty.com](https://www.vaccinate.lacounty.gov), click on “How to Make an Appointment” and follow the steps on the webpage. Residents with disabilities or without computer access can call 1-833-540-0473 between 8:00 am and 8:30 pm 7 days a week for assistance with appointments.

You can also check with your usual health care provider as you may be able to be vaccinated at one of their facilities. A list of facilities and providers offering vaccine is available on [VaccinateLACounty.com](https://www.vaccinate.lacounty.gov) or by clicking [here](#).

## 7. How many doses of COVID-19 vaccine will I need?

- For the J&J/Janssen vaccine, you just need a single dose.
- The Pfizer vaccine is given as 2 doses 21 days apart.
- The Moderna vaccine needs 2 doses given 28 days apart.
- If you are late getting the second dose of a 2-dose series, you do not need to start over. It is important to get the same kind of vaccine for both doses.
- With all 3 vaccines, you are not considered to be [fully vaccinated](#) until 2 weeks after your last vaccine.
- We don't know how long the protection from the vaccine will last yet. This means we don't know if you will need to get a booster dose in the future.

## ABOUT THE VACCINE

## 8. How many COVID-19 vaccines are there?

Around the world over 50 COVID-19 vaccines are being tested in humans. Three vaccines are allowed in the United States so far. They are made by Pfizer, Moderna, and Janssen, a company owned by Johnson & Johnson.

## 9. How do vaccines work?

Vaccines work by preparing your body's natural defenses to recognize and fight off germs.

- Some vaccines contain dead or weakened versions of the germ.
- Others contain substances made to look like part of the germ.
- The COVID-19 vaccines teach the body to make proteins that look like part of the germ. (See the question “How do the COVID-19 vaccines work?” for more information).

When you get a vaccine, your immune system responds.

It:

- Makes antibodies. These are proteins produced naturally by the immune system to fight disease.
- Prepares your immune cells to respond to future infection.
- Remembers the disease and how to fight it. If you are exposed to the germ after getting the vaccine, your immune system can quickly destroy it before you become sick.

This is what makes vaccines so effective. Instead of treating a disease after it happens, vaccines can prevent us from getting sick in the first place.



### 10. How do the COVID-19 vaccines work?

None of the COVID-19 vaccines contain the virus that causes COVID-19 in any form. All 3 COVID-19 vaccines work by teaching our cells how to make harmless spike proteins (the crown-like spikes on the surface of the COVID-19 virus). Making the spike protein does not harm our cells.

- When we are vaccinated, the spike proteins show on the surfaces of our cells. Our immune system sees them and knows that they don't belong there.
- Our bodies react by building an immune response. It makes antibodies that can act against the COVID-19 virus's spike protein and it prepares immune cells. This will protect us if we are exposed to the virus in the future.

The COVID-19 vaccines differ in how they teach our cells to make the spike protein

- The vaccines made by Pfizer and Moderna are called mRNA vaccines. Messenger RNA (mRNA) is genetic material that tells our bodies how to make proteins. The mRNA in the vaccine is wrapped in oily bubbles (known as lipid nanoparticles or LNPs). When the mRNA enters our cells, it teaches them how to make copies of the spike protein.
- The vaccine made by J&J/Janssen is called a viral vector vaccine. It is made of genetic instructions (DNA) inside a 'viral vector' that is used to carry the DNA into our cells. (The viral vector is a harmless version of a common cold virus). Our cells read the genetic material and make mRNA, and this mRNA teaches our cells to make the spike protein.

You can learn more on the [Understanding How COVID-19 Vaccines Work](#) CDC website.

### 11. What is in the vaccines?

For a full list of ingredients, please see each vaccine's Fact Sheet for Recipients and Caregivers: [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#), [Moderna COVID-19 vaccine](#), and [J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine](#). None of the vaccines contain eggs, gelatin, latex, or preservatives.

### 12. Can you get COVID-19 from a vaccine?

No. The vaccines cannot give you COVID-19. But you could have been infected before you got the vaccine and then started showing symptoms afterwards. It can take up to 14 days for symptoms to appear after you have been infected. It is also possible to get infected after you get vaccinated, because it takes time for your body to build immunity and, even though the vaccines are very effective, none are 100%.

None of the COVID-19 vaccines have the virus that causes COVID-19 in them. The viral vector in the J&J/Janssen vaccine is a harmless version of a common cold virus. It can't replicate inside our cells or cause illness and it cannot change our DNA in any way.

Sometimes people get a fever or feel tired for a day or so after getting a vaccine. These vaccine side-effects are normal and are a sign that the body is building immunity.

### 13. What are the side-effects of the COVID-19 vaccines?

You may get side-effects, like the ones after the flu vaccine or shingles vaccine after getting a COVID-19 vaccine. For two-dose vaccines, side-effects are more common after the second dose. These side effects





may affect your ability to do daily activities, but they should go away within a day or two. Not everyone gets side-effects. They may include:

- Fever, chills, and muscle aches
- Headache
- Feeling tired
- Sore or red arm

Side effects are normal and a sign that the vaccine is working. It shows your body is learning to fight a germ and build up immunity. Not everyone gets side-effects. It is important to get the second dose even if you get side effects after the first dose unless a vaccination provider or your doctor tells you not to.

#### 14. When am I considered to be fully vaccinated?

People are considered fully vaccinated:

- 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series (the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines), or
- 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine (the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine)

If it has been less than 2 weeks since your shot, or if you still need to get your second dose, you are NOT fully protected. Keep taking all [prevention steps](#) until you are fully vaccinated.

#### 15. How well do the vaccines work?

In the vaccine studies, all 3 vaccines were very effective at preventing severe illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths. You can't directly compare the results of the trials for the J&J/Janssen and the mRNA vaccines because:

- The studies were done at different times and in different locations - so the level of infection in the communities and the type and number of viral variants varied.
- The studies used different groups of people who had different rates of underlying illness.
- The studies used different definitions of cases, side effects, and serious events.

The best vaccine to get is the one that is being offered to you.

#### 16. Will getting the vaccine cause me to test positive on a COVID-19 test?

No. Vaccines won't cause you to test positive on a PCR or antigen viral test (like the swab test) that looks for current COVID-19 infection. You may test positive on some antibody (blood) tests. This is because one of the ways that vaccines work is to teach your body to make antibodies.

See the public health testing webpage [ph.lacounty.gov/covidtests](https://ph.lacounty.gov/covidtests) to learn more about COVID-19 tests.

### WHO CAN GET THE VACCINE?

#### 17. If I have already had COVID-19, do I still need to get vaccinated?

Yes. You do need the vaccine even if you have had COVID-19. We don't yet know how long you are protected after you have had COVID-19, so it is important to have the vaccine to strengthen your immunity. It is safe to get the vaccine after getting COVID-19 but you should wait until after your isolation period is over. This is so that you don't infect healthcare workers and others when you go to get vaccinated. If you have had monoclonal antibody or convalescent treatment, you should wait for 90 days before getting a COVID-19





vaccine.

### 18. Can children get the COVID-19 vaccine?

No. People under the age of 16 cannot get COVID-19 vaccine at this time. There isn't enough information available yet about the use of these vaccines in children. People age 16 and 17 can get the Pfizer vaccine. The Moderna and J&J/Janssen vaccines are for people 18 and older.

### 19. Can people with weak immune systems get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. People with weak immune systems may be at higher risk of getting COVID-19 and more likely to become very sick. They can get any of the 3 vaccines but are advised to talk to their doctor about the best time to be vaccinated. The vaccine studies included some people with weak immune systems, such as cancer and stable HIV and their side effects were not different. But we don't know how well the vaccines will work for people with weak immune systems compared to people with normal immune systems.

### 20. Can people with allergies get a COVID-19 vaccine?

It depends.

- People who are allergic to things like oral medication, food, pets, or pollen, or people who have a family history of allergies, can be vaccinated.
  - But people who have had an allergic reaction to a vaccine, injectable therapy, polyethylene glycol (PEG), or polysorbate should talk to their doctor to decide if it is safe for them to get vaccinated.
  - There is a small risk of severe allergic reaction with any vaccine.
  - Everyone is observed for allergic reactions after getting a COVID-19 vaccine
- Information about allergic reactions may change. Be sure to check the latest guidance on the CDC [COVID-19 Vaccines and Allergic Reactions](#) webpage and talk to your doctor.

### 21. Can pregnant women get the vaccine?

Yes. Pregnant women can choose to receive any of the 3 vaccines, but it is a personal decision, and they may want to talk it through with their doctor.

- Pregnant women who get COVID-19 are more likely to get sick. They may also be more likely to get pregnancy complications like preterm birth.
- There is limited information about the safety of COVID-19 vaccines during pregnancy as pregnant women were not included in the vaccine studies. However, based on what we know about how these vaccines work, experts do not believe they pose a risk.
  - Pregnant women were not enrolled in the studies, but animal studies did not show any safety concerns.
  - The same vector in the J&J/Janssen vaccine was used in pregnant women in other trials and found to be safe for both mother and infant.
  - Many pregnant women who have received the vaccine are being monitored and so far, no safety concerns have been identified.

### 22. Can women who are breastfeeding get the vaccine?

Yes. Lactating women were not included in the vaccine studies so there are no data on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in these women or the effects of the vaccines on the breastfed infant or milk production.



However, based on what we know about how these vaccines work, they are not thought to be a risk for the mother or baby. Women who are breastfeeding may choose to be vaccinated.

## PROTECTING MYSELF AND OTHERS

### 23. What if I get symptoms of COVID-19 after I have been vaccinated?

You should get tested and stay home and away from others if you have:

- Vaccine side-effects that last more than 2 days
- Symptoms that start more than 2 days after you get the vaccine
- Cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell – these symptoms are NOT side effects of the vaccine

It is still important to watch out for symptoms of COVID-19 even if you have been vaccinated, especially if you've been around someone who is sick.

### 24. Should I get a flu vaccine?

Yes! A flu vaccine only protects you from the flu, but at least it means you won't run the risk of getting flu and COVID-19 at the same time. This can keep you from having a more severe illness. If you are likely to get the COVID-19 vaccine soon, ask your doctor about the best time to get the flu vaccine. This is because a COVID-19 vaccine should not be given within 2 weeks of other vaccines when possible.

### 25. Why do we need a vaccine if we can do other things, like social distance and wear masks?

We need to do as much as we can to stop the pandemic. Vaccines boost your immune system so it will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. Other steps, like masks and social distancing, help lower your chance of being exposed to or spreading the virus. Together, these tools offer the best protection.

### 26. What can I do now to help protect myself from getting COVID-19 until it is my turn to get a vaccine?

To protect yourself and others, follow these recommendations:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a mask when you are around others.
- Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated spaces (outside or well-ventilated spaces are safer).
- Stay at least 6 feet away from others.
- Wash your hands often.

See guidance for [reducing your risk](#). You should do this even after you are fully vaccinated.

### 27. Can I stop wearing a mask once I am vaccinated?

Only in some situations. Once you are [fully vaccinated](#):

- You can visit indoors with a small number of other fully vaccinated people without wearing a mask or physically distancing.
- You can visit indoors with unvaccinated people from one other household without masks or distancing unless any of those people or anyone they live with has an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.







You should still take steps to [protect yourself](#) and others in many situations, such as when you are:

- In public
- Gathering with unvaccinated people from more than one other household
- Visiting with an unvaccinated person who is at increased risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19 or who lives with a person at increased risk

You should still avoid medium or large-sized gatherings.

**28. If I am vaccinated and am exposed to someone who has COVID-19, do I need to quarantine?**

If you do not have symptoms and you are [fully vaccinated](#) you do not need to quarantine or get tested (unless you live in a group setting like a correctional or detention facility or group home). But you must monitor your health for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days and continue to protect yourself and others.

