



COVID-19 Vaccine Q&A

Q. Why should I get vaccinated?

A. Vaccination is currently the only way to prevent serious illness due to the infectious and dangerous COVID-19 virus. The unvaccinated are six times more likely to spread the virus and 12 times more likely to have serious illness, hospitalization, or death than those who are vaccinated.

Q. Is one vaccine more effective than others?

A. All are intended to protect you from severe symptoms and death, but studies show Moderna is slightly more effective than Pfizer and Johnson and Johnson. (This data was based mostly on the alpha variant and before the boosters were studied.) The bottom line is that it is important to get vaccinated, complete the series, and get the booster when you qualify.

<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa2106599>

Q. Can I mix the vaccines if I get a booster shot?

A. Yes, the difference is the timing. If you received the one-dose Johnson and Johnson vaccine, you can receive the booster after two months. Moderna and Pfizer recommend waiting six months after the second dose to get your booster.

Q. What vaccines are available for children 5-11?

A. Pfizer is the only vaccine currently approved for children ages 5-11. Pediatric doses are one-third of the dose of the adult Pfizer vaccine and proven to be equally effective (90%).

Q. Can I still get COVID-19 if I'm vaccinated?

A. Yes, the vaccine doesn't guarantee you won't get COVID-19, but it may keep you from having a severe reaction, hospitalization, or dying, and it will help protect those with whom you come into contact.

Q. Do children with COVID-19 get as sick as adults?

A. About 20% of cases in the U.S. are pediatric patients (school age to teenage years). While children tend to get less severe cases of COVID-19, it's not always the case. Hospitals have seen many cases of severe pediatric COVID-19 and complications that can include multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C). Thousands of children have been hospitalized, and around 200 have died.

Q. When will there be a vaccine for ages four and under?

A. Pfizer is currently testing two vaccines—one for ages 2-5 and one for ages 6 months-2 years. Depending on the findings of the trials, it may take a year.

Q. Are there side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine?

A. Side effects of the vaccine are minor compared to the actual COVID-19 virus infection and vary from person to person. Some people have side effects after the first or second dose, some after both, and some not at all. Usually lasting 24-48 hours, common side effects include headache, body aches, joint aches, fatigue, and fever, which can be treated with Tylenol or Motrin, hydration, and rest.

Q. How long after getting the vaccine am I fully protected?

A. You are fully protected two weeks after your second shot or two weeks after the single Johnson and Johnson. The same applies to booster shots.



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Q. If I've had COVID-19, why do I need to get vaccinated?

A. The immunity from natural infection wanes over the course of weeks to months. Studies have looked at natural immunity from prior infection, and the vaccines provide a higher level of protection because of a higher level of antibodies.

Q. What information do I have to share to get the vaccine? Does it stay private?

A. The vaccine is free, and no insurance, photo identification or immigration status information is required. Some vaccine providers will collect insurance information if you have it and bill your insurance. For those who don't have insurance, the provider still collects some information because states are tracking vaccination numbers. All information is protected by HIPAA laws. (The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) is a federal law that protects sensitive patient health information from being disclosed without the patient's consent or knowledge.)

Q. Where can I go to do more research about the vaccine?

A. The CDC website ([cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)) provides information in various formats about the vaccines, COVID-19, and the variants and is constantly being reviewed and updated. We encourage you to discuss any concerns or questions with a healthcare professional.

Q&A information comes from an 11.30.2021 interview with Dr. Stefanie Ellison, Dr. Jonathan Kendall, and Raquel Garcia, RN, of University Health in Kansas City, Missouri. Answers have been edited by Mid-Continent Public Library staff for clarity and conciseness.

View the full interview on the Library's YouTube channel, [YouTube.com/MCPLMO](https://www.youtube.com/MCPLMO).

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