Updated 7/8/21: This FAQ provides information on the three COVID-19 vaccines that are authorized in the US. These vaccines are made by Moderna, Pfizer, and Janssen/Johnson & Johnson (J&J).

Why is it important to get vaccinated?

COVID-19 vaccination is important because it is the best way to prevent COVID-19. The vaccines are extremely good at preventing people from getting sick from COVID-19 and ending up in the hospital or dying. They also reduce the risk of becoming chronically ill from COVID-19 and from missing work and school.

When we get vaccinated, we aren't just protecting ourselves, but also our family, friends, and neighbors. This includes children under 12 who can't be vaccinated yet and people with very weak immune systems for whom the vaccine is less effective.

The more people get vaccinated the less likely it is that COVID-19 will spread or that new variants of the virus will take hold. Even people who have had COVID-19 should get vaccinated because their natural immunity may not last long enough or be strong enough, and they could get infected again.

<u>You</u> can do your part to help stop the pandemic by getting vaccinated.

How well do the vaccines work?

The vaccines work extremely well. All 3 vaccines greatly reduce the risk of getting sick from COVID-19 and are highly effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalization, and death.

You are not considered to be fully vaccinated until 2 weeks after getting a J&J vaccine or 2 weeks after a second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine. This is because it takes time for your body to build immunity to COVID-19 after you are vaccinated. It is possible to get infected while the vaccine is taking effect, so it is important that you continue to protect yourself against COVID-19 for the full 2 weeks.

Once you are fully vaccinated, there is still a small risk that you could get infected. This is called breakthrough infection and while rare, it is to be expected because no vaccine is perfect. When vaccinated people do get infected, they don't usually get as sick as unvaccinated people and the symptoms don't last as long. Sometimes they have no symptoms at all. If a vaccinated person does get COVID-19, they are less likely to spread the virus to others.

GETTING THE VACCINE

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 also get COVID-19 vaccines at no cost. There are no out-of-pocket payments for anyone.

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

No. COVID-19 vaccine is being given at no cost regardless of immigration status. You will not be asked about your immigration status when you get a COVID vaccine. Your medical information is private and getting a COVID-19 vaccine does not affect your immigration status. You do not need a government-

issued ID or a letter from your employer to get a vaccine. For questions about immigration, visit the Office of Immigrant Affairs webpage oia.lacounty.gov or call 800-593-8222.

How can I get vaccinated?

Vaccines are available at hundreds of locations throughout LA County including clinics, pharmacies, worksites, schools, places of worship, senior housing developments and long-term care facilities. There are also community vaccination sites and mobile or pop-up sites in places like metro stations and parks. In-home vaccination is available for people who are homebound. Many locations do not require an appointment.

Visit VaccinateLACounty.com and click on "How to Get Vaccinated" to find a location or request an in-home vaccination. If you need help, you can call the **DPH Vaccine Call Center** at **833-540-0473,** 7 days a week from 8am to 8:30pm. They can arrange in-home vaccination, free transportation to a vaccination site, or help with paratransit and other services for people with disabilities. Information is also available in multiple languages 24/7 by calling 2-1-1.

I just moved to LA County and my 2nd dose of vaccine is due. Where can I get it?

Visit VaccinateLACounty.com (see instructions above) and click on the filter to find a location that offers the same type of vaccine that you got for your first dose. Be sure to bring your CDC vaccination card to your 2nd dose appointment.

How many doses of COVID-19 vaccine will I need?
* The J&J/Janssen vaccine is given as a single dose.
* The Pfizer vaccine is given as 2 doses 21 days apart.
* The Moderna vaccine is given as 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.

When am I considered to be fully vaccinated?
You are considered fully vaccinated against COVID-19 two weeks after:
* You got a single dose of Johnson & Johnson (J&J)/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine, or
* You got a second dose of a Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, or
* You finished the series of a COVID-19 vaccine that has been listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization.

Keep taking all prevention steps until you are fully vaccinated.

We don't know yet how long the protection from the vaccine will last. This means we don't know if you will need to get a booster dose in the future.

Can I get sick leave when I go to get my vaccine or if I am unable to work afterwards?
Covered Employees in the public or private sectors who work for employers with more than 25 employees are entitled to up to 80 hours of COVID-19 related sick leave from January 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021. This includes attending a vaccine appointment or being unable to work or telework due to vaccine-related symptoms. For more information, see the 2021 COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave [FAQs](#) and [poster](#).

Where can I get a copy of my vaccine record?
The CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card (white card) is the official proof of vaccination. Everyone should be given one when they are vaccinated. **Please keep it safe as it cannot be replaced.** Consider taking a photo or making a photocopy of it.

Everyone who is vaccinated in California can request a digital COVID-19 Vaccination Record at **myvaccinerecord.cdph.ca.gov**. In addition, Healthvana offers digital records to residents of LA County who have received at least one dose of vaccine (regardless of where they were vaccinated) and anyone who has received at least one dose in LA County (regardless of where they live). The Healthvana record can be downloaded to a digital wallet (Apple Wallet for iPhones and Google Pay for Android devices). For more information, go to [VaccinateLACounty.com](#) and click on the [Vaccination Records](#) webpage.

ABOUT THE VACCINE

How do vaccines work?
Vaccines work by preparing your body's natural defenses to recognize and fight off germs that can make you sick.
- Some vaccines have dead or weakened versions of the germ.
- Others have 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 virus that causes COVID-19. They do not have any form of the COVID-19 virus, live, weakened or dead. (See the question "How do the COVID-19 vaccines work?" for more information).

When you get any vaccine, your immune system responds by:
- Making antibodies. These are proteins produced naturally by the immune system to fight disease.
- Preparing your immune cells to respond to future infection.
- Remembering 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.**

How do the COVID-19 vaccines work?
All 3 COVID-19 vaccines work by teaching our immune cells how to make copycat spike proteins (the crown-like spikes on the surface of the COVID-19 virus). Making the spike protein does not harm our cells.
- Our immune system sees the spike protein and knows that it doesn'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). 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. The vector (or vehicle) uses a harmless virus to carry the genetic material to our cells. Our cells read the genetic material and make mRNA, and this mRNA teaches our cells to make the spike protein. The viral vector 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.

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

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](#). The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines contain Polyethylene Glycol (PEG) and the J&J vaccine contains polysorbate. None of the vaccines contain eggs, gelatin, latex, or preservatives.

Do the COVID-19 vaccines contain aborted fetal cells?
No, none of COVID-19 vaccines authorized for use in the United States contain any fetal tissue or fetal cells**.**
- **Pfizer and Moderna** did not use any fetal cell lines to develop or produce their COVID-19 vaccines. But they did use a fetal cell line for laboratory testing before their vaccines were tested on people.
- **Johnson & Johnson** used a fetal cell line to develop and test their COVID-19 vaccine. They also use it for production. The COVID-19 vaccines themselves do not contain any fetal cells.

The fetal cell lines were made in laboratories from cells from 2 abortions conducted in 1973 and 1985. None of the fetal cells used came from a recent abortion or from an abortion done for the sole purpose of vaccine development or other research.

The Catholic Church has reviewed the use of fetal cells for this purpose and has stated that "it is morally acceptable to receive COVID-19 vaccines that have used cell lines from aborted fetuses in their research and production process." If this issue is of concern to you, we encourage you to review the document [COVID-19 Vaccine and Fetal Cell Lines](#) carefully so you can make an informed decision about getting vaccinated.

SAFETY AND SIDE-EFFECTS

Can you get COVID-19 from a vaccine?

No. You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine. None of the COVID-19 vaccines have the virus that causes COVID-19 in them.

If you get COVID-19 shortly after getting vaccinated, it is because you were infected by someone with COVID-19 around the time you were vaccinated. It can take up to 14 days for symptoms to show after you have been infected. So, if you get infected right before getting vaccinated, you might not get sick until after you get your vaccine.

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, no vaccine is 100% effective.

Sometimes people get a fever or feel tired for a day or two after getting a vaccine. These vaccine side effects are normal and are a sign that the body is building immunity. They should go away in a few days.

Does the vaccine cause infertility?

There is no biological reason, evidence, or real-life experience to show that any vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, cause fertility problems. In fact, some women who were vaccinated as part of the COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials and many people who were vaccinated since the trials have become pregnant. To learn more, read the Public Health COVID-19 vaccine information sheet Fact Check: COVID-19 Vaccines do not cause infertility. The vaccines do not change a person's DNA and there is no evidence they affect adolescent development.

Can the COVID-19 vaccine affect my periods?

Some women have reported a change in their period after getting the vaccine, including heavier flow and painful cramps. We don't yet know if these changes are due to the vaccine - menstrual changes were not reported from the vaccine trials and no study results are available on this issue yet. It is important to remember, many things can cause a change to menstrual cycles such as stress, and changes in sleep, diet, exercise, and some medicines. Irregular periods are very common among teens and may have no specific cause at all. If you have concerns about your period or your child's periods, talk to a doctor.

What are common side effects of the COVID-19 vaccines?

After getting a COVID-19 vaccine, you may have side effects like the ones you get after a flu or shingles vaccine. For two-dose vaccines, side effects are more common after the second dose. These side effects may limit 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 that your body is learning to fight the virus and is building 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.

Contact your doctor if you have:
- Vaccine side effects that last more than 2 days
- New 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 (as these are not vaccine side effects)
- Symptoms that get worse or worry you.

Are there any serious side effects?

As with any medicine, it is possible to have an allergic reaction to the vaccine. This is why everyone is observed for a short time after getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

There is a rare but serious risk of a condition involving blood clots and low platelets after receiving the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 Vaccine. This has only happened in about 9 per 1 million women aged 18 to 49 years who got the vaccine. For women aged 50 and older and men of any age, this condition is even more rare.

If you get the J&J vaccine, watch for possible symptoms for 3 weeks after getting vaccinated. These include:
- Severe or constant headaches
- Blurred vision
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Leg swelling
- Stomach pain that will not go away
- Easy bruising or tiny blood spots under the skin beyond the site of the injection

There have also been reports of inflammation of the heart muscle (myocarditis) or outer lining of the heart (pericarditis) in people who received the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. These reports are rare, given the number of vaccine doses administered. Most of the cases were in male adolescents and young adults and most occurred days after the second dose of the vaccine. If you get any of the following symptoms after receiving the vaccine, seek medical help right away:
- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Feelings of having a fast beating, fluttering, or pounding heart.

Most patients with myocarditis and pericarditis who received care improved with medicine and rest and felt better quickly. Those who experience these conditions can usually return to their normal daily activities after their symptoms improve, although they should speak with their doctor before returning to exercise or sports. Myocarditis and pericarditis are more common in people who get COVID-19, and the risks to the heart from COVID-19 infection can be more severe. For more information, visit the CDC webpage Myocarditis and Pericarditis Following mRNA COVID-19 Vaccination.

The CDC continues to recommend COVID-19 vaccination for everyone 12 years of age and older, because the benefits outweigh the risks.

Are the COVID-19 vaccines likely to have any long term side effects?

Long term side effects following any vaccination are extremely rare. Vaccine monitoring has historically shown that if any side effects are going to happen, they generally start within six weeks of getting a vaccine dose. For this reason, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) required each of the authorized COVID-19 vaccines to be studied for at least eight weeks after the final dose during clinical trials. And, the CDC continues to closely monitor COVID-19 vaccines after they are authorized by the FDA. This is how we quickly learned of the rare blood clots with low platelets in a very small number of women who received the J&J vaccine (see above). If scientists find any connection between a safety issue and any vaccine, the FDA and the vaccine manufacturer work toward a solution to address the specific safety concern (for example, a problem with a specific batch, a manufacturing issue, or the vaccine itself).

If I get an adverse reaction (possible side effect) after I am vaccinated, how should I report it?

If you have an adverse event (possible side effect) after you are vaccinated, even if you aren't sure that the vaccine caused it, please report it to VAERS. The Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System is an early warning system that the FDA and CDC use to detect possible safety problems. To make a report, call 1-800-822-7967 or visit https://vaers.hhs.gov/reportevent.html.

If you have signed up for V-Safe, CDC's after vaccination health checker, you can also report your symptoms through the smart phone app.

Neither VAERS nor V-safe provide medical advice. If you have symptoms or health problems that concern you at any time following COVID-19 vaccination, please contact your healthcare provider or seek medical treatment.

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 (swab or spit test) that looks for current COVID-19 infection. You may test positive on some antibody (blood) tests. This is because the vaccines work by teaching your body to make antibodies.

See the public health testing webpage ph.lacounty.gov/covidtests to learn more about COVID-19 tests.

WHO CAN GET THE VACCINE?

If I have already had COVID-19, should I still get vaccinated?

Yes. You should still get vaccinated even if you already had COVID-19. We don't know yet how long you are protected after you have had COVID-19. Getting vaccinated will boost your immunity for better and longer protection against COVID-19, including more infectious variants of the virus.

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.

Can children get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Children age 12 and up can be vaccinated with the Pfizer vaccine. Vaccines are currently being studied in children under the age of 12, and a vaccine may become available to younger children in the late fall or winter.

Approximately a fifth of COVID-19 cases in the US are now in youth. Even though COVID-19 is often milder in children than adults, some children can get very sick or have lasting health problems from COVID-19. Getting your child vaccinated lowers their risk of getting infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. The vaccine will also protect against Multi-symptom Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C) - a rare but serious condition in young people who have had COVID-19.

Children who get infected can spread the virus to others even if they don't feel sick. Getting vaccinated helps to protect friends and families, as well as the larger community. This includes protecting people with weak immune systems and children under 12, who can't be vaccinated yet.

Once your child is fully vaccinated, they will be protected when they visit with friends, play sports, travel to see family, and return to school. They won't need to quarantine if a friend, family member, teacher or teammate gets COVID-19.

For more information see COVID-19 FAQs for Parents on the VaccinateLACounty.com webpage.

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

Yes. People with weak immune systems are strongly urged to get vaccinated because they are at higher risk of getting COVID-19 and are more likely to become very sick if they do get infected.

The vaccines may not work as well for people with certain health conditions or who are taking medicine that severely weaken their immune system (for example, blood related cancers or certain treatments for cancer, organ transplants, and certain autoimmune conditions). These people are advised to talk to their doctor about the best time to be vaccinated, and once they are fully vaccinated, if they should continue to take extra-precautions to keep from getting infected.

Can people with allergies get a COVID-19 vaccine?

It depends.
- People who are allergic to things like oral medication, food (including eggs), latex, pets, or pollen, or people who have a family history of allergies, can be vaccinated.
- If you have had an allergic reaction to a vaccine or injectable therapy talk to your doctor to decide if it is safe to get vaccinated.
- If you are allergic to Polyethylene Glycol (PEG), you should not get the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine. Ask your doctor if you can get the J&J vaccine.
- If you are allergic to polysorbate, you should not get the J&J vaccine. Ask your doctor if you can get the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine.

There is a small risk of severe allergic reaction with any vaccine. This is why everyone is observed for a short time 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 for People with Allergies](#) webpage and talk to your doctor.

Can pregnant women get the vaccine?

Yes. The CDC, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine all agree that COVID-19 vaccines should be offered to women who are pregnant and breastfeeding.

- While we are still learning about the impact of the COVID-19 vaccines on pregnancy, we do know that COVID-19 itself is a serious concern during pregnancy. Pregnant women who get COVID-19 are more likely to become severely ill and be hospitalized than women who are not pregnant. They are also more likely to get pregnancy complications like preterm birth compared to pregnant women who do not have COVID-19.
- Recent reports have shown that people who have received COVID-19 mRNA vaccines during pregnancy (mostly during their third trimester) have passed antibodies to their fetuses, which could help protect the babies after birth.
- There is limited data about the safety of COVID-19 vaccines during pregnancy. But, based on what we know about how these vaccines work, experts do not believe they pose any risk to mother or infant.
  - Pregnant women were not enrolled in the original vaccine 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 gotten the vaccine are being monitored and, so far, no safety concerns have been found for the women or their babies.

If you are pregnant and have questions about getting vaccinated, talk to your doctor.

Can women who are breastfeeding get the vaccine?

Yes. Women who are breastfeeding can get vaccinated. 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, the vaccines are not thought to be a risk for the mother or baby. Recent reports have shown that breastfeeding women who have received COVID-19 mRNA vaccines have antibodies in their breastmilk, which could help protect their babies.

Can I get the COVID-19 vaccine at the same time as a different vaccine?

Yes. Adults and children age 12 and over can get a COVID-19 vaccine at the same time as other vaccines, such as measles and whooping cough. If your child gets a COVID-19 vaccine at a place that doesn't offer the other vaccines that they need, you can go to a different location to get them at any time. There is no need to wait between vaccines.

Can I get a routine medical procedure or screening test if I just had a COVID-19 vaccine?

Most routine medical procedures or screenings can be done before or after getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

Note: if you are due for a routine screening mammogram and have been recently vaccinated for COVID-19, ask your doctor how long you should wait before you get your mammogram. People who have received a COVID-19 vaccine may get swelling in the lymph nodes (called lymphadenopathy) in the underarm near where they got the shot. This swelling is a normal sign that the body is building protection against COVID-19. This temporary swelling could cause a false reading on a mammogram, so it is important to tell the staff about your vaccination. For more details, see the Society of Breast Imaging's Recommendations for Women Receiving the COVID-19 Vaccine.

The COVID-19 vaccine can also affect the results of some kinds of screening tests for tuberculosis (TB), see the CDC webpage COVID-19 Vaccination and Other Medical Procedures.

PROTECTING MYSELF AND OTHERS

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

Some of the side effects from getting a vaccine are similar to symptoms of COVID-19. You should get tested and stay home and away from others if you have:

- Cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell – these symptoms are NOT side effects of the vaccine
- Vaccine side effects (see above) that last more than 2 days after getting 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.

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

Getting the vaccine is the best tool to stop this 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. Vaccines are especially important for preventing spread within households, where it can be difficult to stay apart if one or more family member had COVID-19 or needs to quarantine.

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. For more information see the DPH webpage When You've Been Fully Vaccinated.