



National Institute of  
Environmental Health Sciences  
Worker Training Program

# COVID-19 Vaccine Information for Workers

## Protect Yourself and Others

COVID-19 infection threatens everyone's health and wellbeing. COVID-19, the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, was the leading cause of death in the U.S. in 2020. To defeat this virus, we need to use several approaches. Vaccines are an important part of effective control against spread in your workplace and community. Quarantine or isolation, physical distancing, handwashing, mask wearing, and use of other safety measures at your worksite must continue, even after you have been vaccinated. These measures are important to protect yourself and others.



Photo courtesy of Blyth Morrell, Duke University Hospital

### Top 5 reasons to get vaccinated

1. To curb the spread of the virus and help stop the pandemic.
2. To prevent your family, friends, and coworkers from getting sick.
3. To develop personal immunity and establish herd immunity.
4. To help make sure there are enough medical therapies and hospital beds for those who need them.
5. To avoid shutdowns and social isolation.

### COVID-19 vaccines

According to the Director of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Anthony Fauci, M.D., vaccinating 70% to 90% of the population can halt the spread of the COVID-19 virus by establishing immunity within our communities. This is sometimes called herd immunity. Widespread education about and participation in the vaccination program is needed for it to be fully effective. It is estimated that it will be mid- to late-2021 before we reach the desired level of vaccination for herd immunity.

### Are the vaccines effective?

Health care professionals and vaccine researchers are confident that the vaccine will provide protection from serious COVID-19 disease.

### Important facts about the vaccine are:

- The vaccines DO NOT contain live virus and CANNOT give you COVID-19 disease.
- The available vaccines are more than 95% effective in preventing COVID-19 after getting both shots in the series.
- These vaccines require that the two shots be given many days apart.
- Both shots are necessary for full protection. However, experts do not currently know how long it will protect you from getting the disease after vaccination.
- The vaccine works across age groups, genders, races, and ethnicities.

## How do I weigh the risks and benefits?

Some people may experience mild discomfort after getting the vaccine, but this only lasts a few days. To date, no one has gotten sick or died from getting the vaccine. However, millions of people have gotten sick from the virus and hundreds of thousands have died.

### Comparison between vaccine side effects and COVID-19 health effects

 <p><b>POTENTIAL VACCINE SIDE EFFECTS</b></p>	Soreness at the site of injection
	Headache, fatigue, aches, chills, joint pain, nausea
	Fever
	Allergic reaction (rare)

 <p><b>POTENTIAL COVID-19 HEALTH EFFECTS</b></p>	Death
	Headache, fatigue, shortness of breath, cough, chest pain, joint pain, nausea, shortness of breath, cough, chest pain, joint pain
	Fever, heart palpitations
	Brain fog
	Depression, anxiety, PTSD
	Inflammation of the heart muscle
	Difficulty breathing
	Acute kidney injury
	Rash, hair loss
	Loss of smell and taste, sleep issues, difficulty with concentration, memory loss

## What if I have already had COVID-19?

Workers who have already had COVID-19 can still be vaccinated. Individuals do not need to be tested for the SARS-CoV-2 virus before getting the vaccine. People who are currently infected may wait approximately 90 days after they were diagnosed or after they first showed symptoms before getting vaccinated.

## How do I decide if the vaccine is right for me?

The decision to get vaccinated can be a difficult personal choice. You may hear incorrect information about how safe the vaccine is and how well it works.

You should talk to a trustworthy source such as your primary doctor to make a decision about receiving the vaccine. You can also research websites from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) or your state or local health department.



## Who should not get the vaccine?

The vaccine should not be given to persons with certain underlying medical conditions or to those who have vulnerable or weak immune systems. This includes people with autoimmune diseases like Guillain-Barre. It also includes those who have current or active COVID-19 disease.

Additionally, children under the age of 16 should not get vaccinated until clinical trials are completed and emergency use authorization has been approved for children.

## What if my employer does not offer the vaccine?

If your employer does not offer the vaccine, check with your local or state health department to identify your eligibility and locations near you that are providing it.

## Can pregnant or breast-feeding women be vaccinated?

If a woman is part of a group (e.g., health care personnel) who is recommended to receive a COVID-19 vaccine and is pregnant, she may choose to be vaccinated. A discussion with her primary doctor can help her make an informed decision.

## What about reports of severe allergic reactions to COVID-19 vaccines?

If you have had a severe allergic reaction to other vaccines or injectable therapies, it is possible that you will be allergic to an ingredient in the COVID-19 vaccine. It is very important to discuss your medical history and what is in the vaccine with your doctor prior to getting it. Ultimately, your doctor can help you decide if it is safe for you to get vaccinated.



## Resources

- **CDC COVID-19 Vaccination:** <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/index.html>
- **CDC COVID-19 Vaccines and Allergic Reactions:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/allergic-reaction.html>
- **U.S. Food and Drug Administration COVID-19 Vaccines:** <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/covid-19-vaccines>
- **National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences Worker Training Program COVID-19:** <https://tools.niehs.nih.gov/wetp/covid19worker/index.cfm>
- **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) COVID-19 Vaccines at VA:** <https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/>
- **National Institutes of Health (NIH) Community Engagement Alliance, How Are Vaccines Tested?** <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/oet/ed/ceal/how-are-vaccines-tested.html>
- **NIH Community Engagement Alliance, Learning About Vaccines:** <https://covid19community.nih.gov/resources/learning-about-vaccines>
- **NIH COVID-19 Vaccine Development, Behind the Scenes:** <https://covid19.nih.gov/research-highlights/vaccine-development>