

Resource: COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions

Using these FAQs

Below are some frequently asked questions (FAQs) and their responses regarding the COVID-19 vaccines that are available in the United States. Although new information becomes available each day, these FAQs are a place to start to learn about COVID-19 vaccines, whether as a provider or a consumer.

Your CIL can use these FAQs as a model to provide resources for both internal and public use.

Internally, these FAQs can be used to:

- Educate staff at all levels on COVID-19 disability vaccine facts.
- Train staff on how to answer questions about COVID-19 vaccines from consumers, caregivers, and providers.
- Prepare staff to be better able to combat misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines.

Publicly, these FAQs can be used to:

- Create online resources for the public to access, including consumers, providers, and family members.
- Example: [SCDisabilityVaccine.org](https://www.scdisabilityvaccine.org)
- Inform your CIL's public messaging from social media to website content.

Please go to the next page for the FAQ.

COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions from People with Disabilities

Are you nervous about COVID-19? Here are the facts about protecting yourself and others with vaccination.

Vaccine hesitancy in people with disabilities is often related to their past experiences or fear of how the vaccine will impact their disability.

You can schedule your vaccine by calling 888-677-1199 Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Eastern) - or - email DIAL@usaginganddisability.org

If you have a local disability scheduling resource, you can share that information here.

Virus & Vaccine Education

COVID-19: What is it?

COVID-19 is the nickname for coronavirus. COVID-19 is making people sick all over the world, including people in your community. People with disabilities and underlying medical conditions are at a higher risk of getting sick with COVID-19.

How do you get COVID-19? How does it make you sick?

- COVID-19 is spread through germs from people.
- These germs can be spread when someone who has COVID-19 coughs, sneezes, or when their germs get into the air or on things you touch.
- If you get COVID-19, it can make you feel sick and tired and even make you go to the hospital.
- COVID-19 has made many people sick, especially people with disabilities and health conditions.
- Some of the things that happen when you have COVID-19 are:
 - Have a cough
 - Have a hard time breathing
 - Run a fever
 - Feel achy and tired

I have a disability. Why am I at a higher risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says people with 1 or more medical conditions are 1.5 times more likely to die from COVID-19 (Source 1 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). People with disabilities may have a higher risk of getting very sick or dying if they get COVID-19 because:

- The type of disability you have can make you very sick if you get COVID-19.
- Your disability might mean you have a weaker immune system.
- COVID-19 can make the symptoms you already have get worse.
- If you have a breathing disability, getting COVID-19 can make it a lot harder to breathe.
- You may have limited mobility or cannot avoid coming into close contact with others who may be infected, such as direct support providers and family members.
- You may have a hard time understanding information about COVID-19.
- You may have difficulty washing your hands and staying at least 6 feet away from others to protect yourself from COVID-19.
- You may not be able to communicate or explain how you are feeling.
- Social factors may increase your risk of serious illness from COVID-19.

What social reasons put me at risk because of my disability?

Many other reasons may put you at an increased risk, such as where you live, lack of access to medical care, costs of medical care, or the type of disability you have. Please see below for some examples:

Where you live

- You might live far away from COVID-19 vaccination centers, testing sites, doctor's offices, and other medical help.
- If you live in a care facility, you are more than twice as likely to die from COVID-19 and more than four times as likely to get COVID-19 than people with disabilities who do not live in a care facility.
- You may live in an area that does not have public transportation and/or do not have your transportation.
- If you live far away from your doctor, you might not get help until much later.

Access to Medical Care

People with disabilities are at higher risk because going to the doctor and getting care can be more challenging. Below are some of the reasons why going to the doctor can be harder for people with disabilities.

- You may not have been able to get to medical exams because the doctor’s office is not accessible.
- You may not have received proper care because the devices or medical table were not accessible.
- You may have felt like the nurses, doctors, or other medical staff had a negative attitude toward you or your disability.
- You may have had a hard time understanding what your doctor or medical staff were telling you.
- You may have felt your disability was ignored.
- You may have felt that the doctor or medical staff didn't understand your disability.
- You may have gone to the doctor before and felt they didn’t know how to care for you.
- You may have felt that you did not get the treatment you needed.

Costs

- You might not have health insurance.
- Without insurance, you might be less likely to go to the doctor or hospital because of the cost.
- You may have other costs like childcare, transportation, parking, or missing work that might make it harder to get to a free COVID-19 testing or vaccination site.

Your type of disability, where you live, access to care, and cost are all things that might keep you away from the doctor or a free testing site.

- If you can’t get tested, you don’t know if you have COVID-19.
- If you don’t know if you have COVID-19, you can accidentally give COVID-19 to other people.
- If you don’t know you have COVID-19, you might get very sick before getting help.
- You might not want to go to the doctor. If you don’t go to the doctor, you might not learn you are sick until much later, when you could be much sicker and have a hard time getting better.

It is important that people with disabilities who are at high risk get the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as they can.

How do I protect myself from getting COVID-19?

- Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.
- Stay away from large groups of people.
- Wear a face mask when you are around other people.
- Get a COVID-19 vaccine.
- What can you do?

- You can schedule your vaccine by calling 888-677-1199 Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Eastern) - or - email DIAL@usaginganddisability.org
- (If you have a local disability scheduling resource, you can share that information here.)

Vaccines: What is a vaccine?

What is a COVID-19 vaccine?

A vaccine is a type of shot with medicine. The medicine in a COVID-19 vaccine fights the virus and helps protect you from getting sick.

Why are people getting a vaccine?

People get a vaccine to make it easier for their body to fight COVID-19.

What COVID-19 vaccines are available in the United States?

In the United States, the vaccines that have been approved are:

1. Pfizer BioNTech
2. Moderna
3. Johnson & Johnson (J&J)
4. Novavax

The Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control for people 6 months and older (Source 44 - Centers for Disease Control, 2022).

The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control for people ages 6 months and older (Source 44 - Centers for Disease Control, 2022).

J&J has been approved under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for individuals 18 and older.*

Novavax has been approved under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for people ages 12 and older (Source 49- FDA, 2022, Source 55- Centers for Disease Control, 2022, Source 57- Centers for Disease Control, 2022).

The COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective; they have been evaluated in tens of thousands of participants in clinical trials (Source 48 - Centers for Disease Control, 2022).

Vaccines are available to people ages 6 months and older

- Children ages 6 months to 17 years:
 - Pfizer BioNTech
 - Moderna
- Children ages 12-17

- Novavax COVID-19 vaccine
- Adults ages 18 and older
 - Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine and booster(s)
 - Moderna COVID-19 vaccine and booster(s)
 - Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine and booster
 - Novavax COVID-19 vaccine

*You will find the most updated information about the J&J vaccine at [Johnson & Johnson's Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

What is Emergency Use Authorization?

An Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) happens when supplies or medicine like a vaccine are needed quickly in an emergency. The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic is an example of an emergency.

- In an emergency, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has the power to approve a vaccine quickly.
- In an emergency, the supplies or medicine will help prevent a specific disease like COVID-19.
- This does not mean that important steps were skipped in making the vaccines safe.

Is it true that the vaccine has the virus in it?

No, none of the COVID-19 vaccines approved in the United States contain the live virus. All three vaccines give your immune system the tools it needs to attack the COVID-19 virus. Each vaccine does this in different ways.

What is a Viral Vector vaccine, and how does it work?

J&J's vaccine is a viral vector vaccine.

- When making viral vector vaccines, scientists use a harmless virus to carry information to the body
- The body makes a harmless piece of protein, and your immune system then makes antibodies in response.
- This teaches your body how to protect you against future infections.
- The harmless virus and the protein it makes cannot make you sick.
- After the J&J vaccine, your immune system can make antibodies to protect against COVID-19 infection.
- You are not injected with the COVID-19 virus.

Is the J&J Vaccine Safe?

Scientists recommend Moderna and Pfizer's mRNA COVID-19 vaccines and boosters over Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine and booster. An mRNA type of COVID-19 vaccine and booster is your safest option, unless your doctor says you should not have an mRNA vaccine.

Johnson and Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine and boosters will remain available:

- If you had a severe reaction after an mRNA vaccine dose
- If you have a severe allergy to an ingredient of Pfizer or Moderna (mRNA COVID-19 vaccines)
- If Pfizer or Moderna vaccines are not available to you
- If you want to get the J&J COVID-19 vaccine, even though scientists recommend Pfizer or Moderna

What is a protein subunit vaccine, and how does it work?

Novavax is a protein subunit vaccine.

- When making protein subunit vaccines, scientists only use parts of the virus that do the best job of getting your immune system going.
- This type of vaccine contains S proteins that are harmless.
- When your body recognizes the proteins, in response, your immune system makes antibodies and white blood cells (Source 50 - Mayo Clinic, 2022).
- This type of vaccine has been used for many years. Examples include flu, Hepatitis B, and Whooping Cough vaccines (Source 51 - Centers for Disease Control 2022).
- This type of vaccine is different from the mRNA and Viral Vector vaccines because it contains something called an adjuvant (Source 52 - Yale Medicine).
- An adjuvant is an ingredient used to increase your immune system's response. They have been used for many years in a variety of vaccines and are very safe (Source 53 - Centers for Disease Control, 2022).

What is an mRNA vaccine, and how does it work?

Moderna and Pfizer are messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines.

- These vaccines deliver a tiny piece of safe genetic material from the virus to cells in the body.
- This material gives instructions for making copies of something called spike proteins.
- Spike proteins stimulate an immune response and produce antibodies.
- If your body is infected with the virus, your cells will remember and plan how to respond (Source 3 - Katella, 2021).
- After the spike protein is made, our body breaks down the mRNA and removes it.
- mRNA vaccines do not and can't change or interact with your DNA.

- mRNA vaccines do not go to where DNA is located in our bodies (Source 4 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).
- Even though this type of vaccine is new, research and development on it have been going on for over 50 years (Source 5 - Dolgin, 2021).
- The vaccines went through the same development and steps as other vaccines. The COVID-19 vaccines were developed quickly to save lives.

Why is the COVID-19 vaccine important for people with disabilities?

People with disabilities may have a higher risk of getting very sick or dying if they get COVID-19. This is because of many possible reasons listed below:

- The type of disability you have can make you very sick if you get COVID-19.
- Your disability might mean you have a weaker immune system.
- COVID-19 can make the symptoms you already have get worse.
- If you have a breathing disability, getting COVID-19 can make it a lot harder to breathe.
- You may have limited mobility or cannot avoid coming into close contact with others who may be infected, such as direct support providers and family members.
- You may have a hard time understanding information about COVID-19.
- You may have a hard time washing your hands and staying at least 6 feet away from others to protect yourself from COVID-19.
- You may not be able to communicate or explain how you are feeling.
- Social reasons may increase your risk of serious illness from COVID-19.

People with disabilities at high risk must get the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible (Source 6 - International Disability Alliance, 2020).

COVID-19 is dangerous. The vaccine is not. The effects of COVID-19 are worse than the vaccine's side effects.

You should talk to your doctor if you think you may have a high risk of getting very sick from COVID-19.

What if I'm allergic to other vaccines?

You should still consider getting the COVID-19 vaccine even if you have allergies to other vaccines. If you have had an allergic reaction to other vaccines, talk with your doctor as the COVID-19 vaccine may be very different.

- Pfizer & Moderna COVID-19 Vaccines (mRNA) (Source 7 – Warren et al., 2021)
 - Studies show that most allergic reactions to the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are related to an ingredient used in the vaccine called Polyethylene Glycol (PEG).
 - Most allergic reactions are to PEG, not the mRNA.

- Johnson & Johnson (J&J) COVID-19 Vaccines (Source 8 – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021)
 - For Johnson and Johnson, the ingredient that causes the most allergic reactions is Polysorbate.
- Novavax COVID-19 Vaccines
 - Polysorbate is also an ingredient in the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine (Source 54 - Melbourne Vaccine Education Centre).

PEG and Polysorbate are common ingredients in vaccines. PEG is a common ingredient in Gatorade or Miralax. Both of these ingredients have been known to cause allergic reactions in some people. Most people are not allergic to PEG or Polysorbate.

If you know you are allergic to one ingredient in the vaccines, ask your doctor if another vaccine would be better for you. You may still be able to get the vaccine because there are different kinds of vaccines (Source 8 – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

You should still get the vaccine if you have other non-medical allergies, such as allergies to some foods, animals, or environments (Source 8 – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

If you are worried about allergies, you should ask your doctor if it is safe to get the COVID-19 vaccine.

What are booster shots? What does it mean to be up-to-date on my COVID-19 vaccine??

- COVID-19 booster shots are doses of a COVID-19 vaccine that will make sure your first round of vaccine is strong for a longer amount of time.
- It is common for vaccines to get weaker over time.
- This could mean you're less protected against virus variants. These variants can be easier to get and spread than the original virus.
- COVID-19 vaccines are working well to prevent severe sickness, keep you out of the hospital, and prevent death. Getting your COVID-19 vaccine can help keep you safe from Long COVID as well (Source 58 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022).
- Even though vaccines work, we are starting to see less protection against getting sick (Source 13 – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022). Booster shots add the protection you need. Getting your vaccine and booster shots at the prescribed time will help you stay up-to-date on your COVID-19 vaccine.
- People with disabilities are at increased risk of getting very sick or dying from COVID-19. Getting booster shots can help protect you better.
- Many vaccines that you had in the past include booster shots. You get booster shots after your first chickenpox, tetanus, mumps and measles, and other vaccines.

What is the difference between bivalent and monovalent shots?

- A monovalent vaccine has ingredients that fight one strain of a virus. The COVID-19 monovalent vaccines and boosters were made to fight the original COVID-19 virus (Source 60 - Food and Drug Administration, 2022).
- A bivalent vaccine has ingredients that fight two strains of a virus (Source 59 - Food and Drug Administration, 2022). The original COVID-19 vaccines were monovalent. The updated COVID-19 vaccine boosters contain mRNA from
 - The original SARS-CoV-2 virus
 - A strain of the Omicron variant to fight against BA.4 and BA.5. (Source 60 - Food and Drug Administration, 2022).

Why is a bivalent booster important?

- The updated boosters will provide more protection against the COVID-19 virus. They provide more protection because they have two mRNA strains that teach your body how to fight the virus. Scientists use mRNA from the original COVID-19 virus. The mRNA from the original COVID-19 virus increases the protection you get from your first vaccines. They add mRNA that fights the BA.4 and BA5 variants. The BA.4 and BA5 variants are making most people sick right now. Scientists expect these variants will continue infecting people into the fall and winter of 2022 (Source 60 - Food and Drug Administration, 2022).

Does the bivalent booster have different side effects?

- Side effects from the bivalent boosters are similar to the side effects from the original monovalent vaccines.
- Most side effects are redness and swelling where you got your vaccine. You may also have fatigue, headache, fever, and joint pain (Source 60 - Food and Drug Administration, 2022).

Will the monovalent vaccines and boosters still be used?

- The monovalent vaccines will still be used for your primary series of COVID-19 vaccines.
- The Pfizer monovalent booster will still be used for children ages 5 to 11.
- The monovalent booster will no longer be used for people 12 years of age and older (Source 59 - Food and Drug Administration, 2022).

Who should get a booster shot?

People 5 years and older should get at least 1 booster shot after completing their COVID-19 vaccine primary series.* Your primary vaccine series is either one shot of J&J or 2 shots of Moderna, Pfizer, or Novavax vaccines.

- *People ages 5 to 11 that got the Moderna vaccine for your primary vaccine series are not eligible for a booster shot (Source 61 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022).

You should get the new bivalent booster shot if you (Source 61 -Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022):

- Are 12 years or older.

- It has been 2 months or longer since you had your last dose.

You should get the monovalent booster shot if you (Source 61 -Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022):

- Are between the ages of 5 and 11
- Got the Pfizer vaccine for your primary vaccine series
- It has been at least 5 months since your 2nd dose

Which booster shot(s) should I get?

Children and Youth ages 5 to 17 (Source 61 -Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022):

- **Children 5 years old and older should get a single booster shot.**
 - If you are **5 to 11 years old** and got the Pfizer vaccine for your primary vaccine series, you can get the Pfizer monovalent booster shot.
 - If you are **12 to 17 years old**, you can get the Pfizer bivalent booster shot.
 - If you are under 12 and got the Moderna vaccine for your primary vaccine series, you should not get a booster shot.
- **What if my child already got 1 monovalent booster shot?**
 - If it has been 2 months or longer since their last shot, and they are at least 12 years old, then your child is eligible to get the bivalent booster.
- **What if my child has a weakened immune system and already got 2 monovalent booster shots?**
 - If it has been 2 months or longer since their last shot, and they are at least 12 years old, then your child is eligible to get the bivalent booster.

People ages 18 and older (Source 61 -Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022):

- **If you are 18 or older, you can get the bivalent booster if it has been 2 months or longer since:**
 - You finished your primary vaccine series
 - You got a booster shot
- **There are 2 bivalent boosters, one is Pfizer, and the other is Moderna.**
 - It does not matter which brand you get.
 - For your primary vaccine series, your options are Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, or Novavax.
- **I already got the monovalent booster shot. Can I still get a bivalent booster?**
 - If it has been at least 2 months since your last booster shot, you can get the Bivalent booster.
- **I already got 2 doses of the monovalent booster shot. Can I still get a bivalent booster?**
 - If you are 50 years old or older or have a moderately or severely compromised immune system, you may have already gotten 2 monovalent booster shots.
 - As long as it has been at least 2 months since your last booster, you are eligible for the new bivalent booster.

Note: If you had to get a certain vaccine because you are allergic to one of the ingredients in other COVID-19 vaccines, then talk to your doctor about booster options (Source 13 – Centers for Disease Control, 2022).

When should I get my booster shots?

When you should get your booster shot depends on your age and when you finished your primary vaccine series or got your last dose (Source 61 -Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022).

- Children ages 5 to 11 years old, who got the Pfizer vaccine, can get the the Pfizer monovalent booster 5 months after finishing their primary vaccine series.
- People 12 years old and older can get the bivalent booster 2 months after finishing your primary vaccine series or getting your last booster.

If you have had an allergic reaction to a COVID-19 vaccine ingredient in the past, then your doctor may tell you to not get that vaccine.

- **If you have been instructed not to get one type of COVID-19 vaccine, you may still be able to get another type.**
- Talk to your doctor to find out which COVID-19 vaccine booster is best for you.

Booster shots add the protection you need. Getting your vaccine and booster shots at the prescribed time will help you stay up-to-date on your COVID-19 vaccine.

What is the difference between booster shots and additional doses for people with disabilities?

A booster shot is given months after your primary vaccine series of the COVID-19 vaccine because you become less protected against getting sick over time (Source 17 – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

An additional dose is different from a booster shot. If your disability causes a weakened immune system, you may need a third dose in your primary mRNA vaccine series. Additional doses can make your immune system’s response to the COVID-19 vaccine better (Source 18 – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

The additional dose is available for people 5 years and older with weakened immune systems. Talk to your doctor or trusted medical professional to learn if an additional dose is right for you.

People over 5 years old with weakened immune systems should get (Source 18 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022):

- Primary Vaccine Series:
 - Pfizer for ages 5 years and up
 - Dose 1
 - Dose 2

- Dose 3 (“additional dose”)
 - Moderna for ages 5 years and up
 - Dose 1
 - Dose 2
 - Dose 3 (“additional dose”)
 - J&J for ages 18 and up
 - Dose 1
 - Dose 2
 - Novavax for ages 12 and up:
 - Dose 1
 - Dose 2
- **Booster Shots:**
 - Pfizer monovalent booster shot
 - 1 shot for children ages 5 to 11 who received the Pfizer primary vaccine series
 - Pfizer bivalent booster shot
 - 1 shot for people 12 years old and older who got Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, or Novavax for their primary vaccine series.
 - Moderna bivalent booster shot
 - 1 shot for people 12 years old and older who got Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, or Novavax for their primary vaccine series.

Why should I ask my family members, friends, and care providers to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Sometimes the type of help you need can put you at a higher risk of getting COVID-19. For example, you might be at more risk of getting COVID-19 if you have one of the following:

- You must come in close contact with others who help you, such as direct care providers, personal caregivers, teachers, and family members. People near you could have COVID-19 and spread it to you.
- You have trouble understanding information or practicing safety skills, such as hand washing, wearing a mask, and social distancing
- You are not able to communicate when you are feeling sick.

To help keep you healthy, your family, teachers, personal caregivers, direct care providers, and others who support you should get the COVID-19 vaccine!

COVID-19 Vaccination & Booster Timeline:

Pfizer Vaccine (mRNA)

For Ages 6 months to 4 years:

Primary vaccine series:

- 3 total shots

- First 2 shots given 3 to 8 weeks apart**
- Third shot is given 8 weeks after 2nd shot

*For Ages **5 and Up**:*

Primary vaccine series:

- First 2 shots given 3 to 8 weeks apart**

Moderna Vaccine (mRNA)

*For Ages **6 Months and Up**:*

Primary vaccine series:

- First 2 shots given 4 to 8 weeks apart**

J&J Vaccine (viral vector)*

*For Ages **18 and Up**:*

One dose primary vaccine:

- 1 shot

Novavax (protein subunit)

*For Ages **12 and Up**:*

Primary vaccine series:

- 2 total shots given 3 to 8 weeks apart**

Booster Shots:

*For Ages **5 to 11 who got the Pfizer vaccine**:*

Booster:

- You should get a booster shot **5 months** after your 2nd dose.
 - This booster shot can only be Pfizer.
 - **Children under 12 who got the Moderna vaccine do not qualify for boosters**

*For Ages **12 and up**:*

NEW Updated Booster:

- You should get the updated booster, **2 months** after your last primary vaccine shot OR booster shot. You do not have to have any additional booster shots to get the updated booster.
 - Children 12 to 17: This booster shot can only be Pfizer.
 - People 18 and older: This booster shot can be Pfizer or Moderna

For Ages **50 and up who got the J&J vaccine:*

Booster:

- You should get the Pfizer or Moderna booster shot **2 months after your 1st shot.**
- You should get the NEW Updated Booster **2 months after your 2nd shot.** This booster shot can be Pfizer or Moderna.

****A longer time between the 1st and 2nd shot may give you more protection and minimize rare side effects. Talk to your doctor about the timing for the 2nd dose in your primary series.**

Talk to your doctor about which booster shot is right for you and the best time to get yours (Source 56 - Centers for Disease Control, 2022).

How do I schedule my COVID-19 vaccine and booster shot?

The Disability Information and Access Line (DIAL) is now available to help people with disabilities get vaccinated. The DIAL's trained staff is standing by to:

- Help find local vaccination locations
- Assist with making vaccination appointments
- Connect callers to local services – such as accessible transportation – to overcome barriers to vaccination.

The hotline also can provide information and resources to answer questions and address concerns about the vaccines and can connect callers to information and services that promote independent living and address fundamental needs, such as food, housing, and transportation.

Call 888-677-1199 Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Eastern) - or - email DIAL@usaginganddisability.org

If you have a local disability scheduling resource, you can share that information here.

Addressing Safety & Trust

Safety: I have a disability, and I'm nervous about the vaccine. How do I know it's safe and works for me?

COVID-19 vaccines are the best way to protect yourself from getting very sick or dying from COVID-19. The effects of COVID-19 can be much worse for a person with a disability than any of the side effects from the vaccine.

People with disabilities are often much safer if they get the vaccine. The vaccines do not give you COVID-19.

Getting COVID-19 is much worse than any vaccine side effects.

Let's learn about normal side effects that you may have from getting vaccinated and why the COVID-19 vaccine is safe for everyone, including people with disabilities.

Are there side effects from the shot?

Some people might experience side effects from the shot, and others will not.

- Side effects might include pain, redness, or swelling where you received the shot.

- Other side effects that you might have are:
 - fever
 - pain
 - chills
 - headache
 - nausea

If you have any of these side effects, it can mean the vaccine is working. Your body is learning to protect itself against COVID-19. Side effects should go away after a few days. If you are worried about any side effects that you have, you should contact your doctor.

When you get your COVID-19 vaccine, you can [sign up for V-Safe](#). V-Safe is an after-vaccine health checker app available for smartphones (Source 14 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

I worry about how the vaccines will impact my disability and health condition. Why should I get vaccinated?

Without the COVID-19 vaccine, you are at the most significant risk of getting very sick, going to the hospital, and dying.

People with disabilities may have a higher risk of getting very sick or dying if they get COVID-19 (Source 15 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). This is because of many possible reasons listed below:

- The type of disability you have can make you very sick if you get COVID-19.
- Your disability might mean you have a weaker immune system.
- COVID-19 can make the symptoms you already have get worse.
- If you have a breathing disability, getting COVID-19 can make it a lot harder to breathe.

I heard the vaccines give you the COVID-19 virus. Is that true?

No. None of the COVID-19 vaccines approved in the United States contain the live virus. The vaccines approved in the United States are the Pfizer vaccine, Moderna vaccine, Novavax vaccine, and the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine. The shots do not use the live virus. They can't make you sick with COVID-19 (Source 16 – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

Why should I bother getting vaccinated if I can still get COVID-19?

In most cases, the COVID-19 shot will prevent you from becoming sick and going to the hospital if you test positive for the virus.

- Most of the people who are in the hospital with COVID-19 have not been fully vaccinated. This means they have not received all of the recommended doses of the shot.
- You can still catch the virus from someone after you get the shot. This is called a breakthrough infection.
- If you got the shot and still get COVID-19, you will most likely have mild symptoms. The vaccine helps you not get as sick as you could if you were not vaccinated.
- Getting vaccinated is your best chance at protecting yourself from getting very sick, going to the hospital, or dying from COVID-19 (Source 17 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

I've already had COVID-19, so why should I get the vaccine?

It is possible to become sick with COVID-19 more than once. Scientists learned getting the shot may better protect you from COVID-19 (Source 18 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

- After getting sick with COVID-19, you may have “natural immunity.”
- Natural immunity from COVID-19 happens when your body produces antibodies to fight off COVID-19 after you have been exposed to or gotten sick with the virus.
- This natural immunity does not last very long.
- Natural immunity may not protect you from COVID-19 variants (Source 13 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).
- Consider getting your COVID-19 vaccine to protect yourself and your community.

Trust: I don't trust the information I'm getting about vaccines. Why should I trust the vaccine now?

Your doctor may have told you to wait to get vaccinated. We know COVID-19 vaccines are safe for many people with disabilities.

Some people are still worried about trusting the vaccine, especially if they have a disability. Let's talk about common questions about vaccine trust:

I heard the vaccine was made quickly. Why should I trust it?

The three COVID-19 vaccines available in the U.S. (Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson) were developed in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. A pandemic is a widespread sickness that affects the whole world.

- Research that led to these types of vaccines has been going on for over 50 years.
- The COVID-19 vaccine went through the same steps as other vaccines.
- The COVID-19 vaccines were just made quickly to save lives.

- COVID-19 vaccines were made thanks to funding and scientists around the world working together (Source 16 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).
- The COVID-19 vaccines are safe and are proven to work for people with disabilities (Source 19 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).
- People with disabilities are at greater risk for getting sick and dying from COVID-19 due to their medical conditions, group living settings, or issues in the health and social systems that are not fair or equal (Source 19 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).
- Consider getting vaccinated to protect yourself and your community.

Why should I trust the vaccine is safe for me?

Due to past and present discrimination, people with disabilities might not trust medical companies or politicians who encourage vaccination. Even though you may not trust medical companies or politicians, COVID-19 vaccines protect the disability community. (Source 20 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021)

- You might be afraid to get the vaccine because of information that isn't true.
- You may have experienced trauma from the medical care you've received. Trauma can include serious physical or emotional harm.
- You may be worried because information about your disability may not be included in what you've learned about the vaccination.
- Maybe you're worried because the scientists keep changing the information.
- Maybe you have read one thing about COVID-19, but a new thing you've read says something different.
- Maybe the information is not shared in a way that you can understand.

It can be hard to know what's right or wrong. Here are the facts about the COVID-19 vaccine:

- Evidence shows these vaccines are safe for people without and with disabilities (Source 20 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).
- The vaccines help slow the spread of COVID-19 and lower the chances of getting very sick or dying from COVID-19.
- Many independent groups, including those led by doctors of color, have done their work to test the vaccines. They say the vaccines work and are safe (Source 21 - National Medical Association, 2020).
- Many government officials, including all living U.S. presidents and current governors, got COVID-19 vaccines (Source 22 - Link, 2021).

How does knowing someone who has already gotten their shot, and is doing well, encourage me to get the vaccine?

- The COVID-19 vaccine has been available since 2020. This means you probably know one or more people who have gotten it and are doing well. This is good news for a few reasons:
 - If you are nervous, it gives you someone to talk to about how it went for them.
 - Any common side effects they had will give you an idea of what might happen when you get the shot.
 - If they are a person with a disability, they can share how they found an accessible vaccine site.
 - Hearing about another person's experience might help to give you confidence.
 - You might not know that you know someone who's gotten the shot, but don't be afraid to ask around.
 - Having friends and family you know you can trust to talk about it goes a long way to help you feel more confident about getting the shot.

Protecting Yourself & Others

Variant Facts:

What is a COVID-19 variant?

A COVID-19 variant is a version of the COVID-19 virus that's just a little different from the version before it. Some of the most common differences are that COVID-19 variants can spread faster and more easily and can also make you sicker. For example, the Alpha variant spread just a little faster than the original version of the COVID-19 virus (Source 23 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

Two of the variants that you might hear a lot about are the Delta and Omicron variants. That is because both of these variants spread easily and can make you very sick.

Variants of viruses are common, and the CDC tells us these variants were expected. People with disabilities are at a higher risk of getting COVID-19 and they are also at higher risk of getting COVID-19 variants.

As a person with a disability, how can I protect myself from COVID-19 variants?

The best way for people with disabilities to protect themselves from COVID-19 variants is by getting a vaccine. A vaccine may not stop you from getting sick, but it will help lower the risk that you will get very sick and go to the hospital with a COVID-19 variant.

If you have already gotten your vaccine, getting a booster shot is another way you can help protect yourself from COVID-19 variants. This makes your immune system stronger to fight the virus.

Wearing a mask also lowers your risk of getting COVID-19 and all of the COVID-19 variants (Source 23 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

Talk to your doctor, or another medical provider you trust, about which COVID-19 vaccine is the best for you. You should also make sure to wear masks anytime you're inside in a public place and wash your hands often.

I'm concerned about the vaccine for people in my life. How does it impact children, older adults, or pregnant people, including those with disabilities?

Can children get the vaccine?

Yes, children can get the vaccine, including children with disabilities (Source 31 – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

Vaccines are available to people ages 6 months and older:

- Children ages 6 months to 17 years
 - Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine
 - Moderna COVID-19 vaccine
- Children ages 12 to 17 years
 - Novavax COVID-19 vaccine

A vaccine booster shot is recommended for people 5 years old and older, unless you are under the age of 12 and received the Moderna vaccine for your primary vaccine series.

- If you are 5 to 11 years old and received the Pfizer vaccine for your primary vaccine series, you can get the Pfizer monovalent booster shot.
- If you are 12 to 17 years old, you can get the Pfizer bivalent booster shot.

The Johnson & Johnson and Novavax COVID-19 vaccines are not authorized for people under 18 years of age.

- Adults ages 18 and older
 - Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine and booster(s)
 - Moderna COVID-19 vaccine and booster(s)
 - Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine and booster
 - Novavax COVID-19 vaccine

- Food and Drug Administration research shows that the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine caused an immune response in ages 6 months to 4 years of age comparable to that of older adults (Source 47 - Food & Drug Administration, 2022).
- Research also shows that the immune response for the Moderna vaccine in children was comparable to the immune response to that of adults (Source 47 - Food & Drug Administration, 2022).
- At this time, the vaccine has not caused any severe side effects in children. Those side effects reported have been mild and are usually more common with the second shot (Source 46 - Centers for Disease Control, 2022)
- Without vaccination, children risk having serious long-term or lifelong health effects from COVID-19, hospitalization, or death. This risk is greater for children with disabilities. The CDC recommends vaccination as soon as possible to protect all young children from COVID 19 (Source 46 - Centers for Disease Control, 2022).
- Children who get the vaccine are less likely to miss school due to COVID-19 because they are less likely to get sick (Source 32 – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).
- Vaccination slows the spread of COVID-19. Slowing the spread of COVID-19 will help protect everyone, especially children with disabilities (Source 34 – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).
- Parents and caregivers can schedule their children for the vaccination via [vaccine.gov](https://www.vaccine.gov)
 - If you have a child with a disability who needs a reasonable accommodation to get the vaccine, please make sure to tell the vaccine provider when you schedule the child’s appointment.
- A reasonable accommodation could be a quiet room or the ability to have a trusted person present (Source 32 – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

Can someone be too old to get vaccinated?

No. If you are older than 6 months old, you can get a COVID-19 vaccine (Source 24 – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

Should older adults get vaccinated against COVID-19?

Yes. People 65 years of age and older are at higher risk of becoming very sick and dying from COVID-19. The vaccines are 94% effective at protecting older adults from severe sickness and death (Source 27 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021 and Source 28 - Administration for Community Living, 2021).

Should people living in nursing or group homes get vaccinated?

Yes, people living in group care facilities—such as nursing or group homes—should especially get vaccinated against COVID-19. A lot of people have died from COVID-19 who were living in a group home or nursing home. It is hard to protect yourself if you live with people and new staff are coming in and out of your home. People ages 65 and older and those with disabilities are at higher risk of having to go to the hospital for help or dying from COVID-19. For individuals who are living in facilities, the risk of catching the virus is higher. Statistics show that over a third of

all COVID-related deaths were of people who lived in facilities (Source 29 - United States Department of Justice, 2021, Source 30 - New York Times, 2021, Source 31 - Administration for Community Living, 2021).

I'm thinking about having kids. I heard the COVID-19 vaccine can make me unable to have children. Is this true?

No. There is no evidence that any vaccines, including COVID-19, cause fertility problems or becoming pregnant in people with or without disabilities.

- Many people have become pregnant and had healthy births after getting their vaccine, including people with disabilities.
- Some people that received vaccines during the COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials became pregnant and had healthy babies.
- Antibodies made after vaccination will not cause problems with fertility or becoming pregnant.
- Vaccine ingredients do not cause problems with fertility or getting pregnant (Source 32 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

If I'm pregnant or breastfeeding, should I get vaccinated?

Yes. The CDC recommends all people ages 6 months and older get the vaccine. This includes people who are pregnant and disabled people who are pregnant.

- Someone pregnant has a higher chance of getting very sick from COVID-19.
- Someone who is pregnant and gets COVID-19 has a higher chance of going to the hospital than someone who is not pregnant (Source 33 – Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine, 2021)
- COVID-19 is more dangerous for pregnant people with disabilities (Source 34 – Satin & Sheffield, 2021).

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding and a person with a disability, you can likely get a COVID-19 vaccine. Here is the good news:

- COVID-19 vaccines are safe for both the pregnant person and baby before birth, including those with disabilities.
- People who receive the mRNA COVID-19 vaccines when pregnant build antibodies that may protect the baby from COVID-19.
- People who are breastfeeding and vaccinated can pass good protective antibodies to their baby through their breast milk. This may protect the baby from COVID-19 (Source 35 – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

Don't let barriers stop you from getting vaccinated

COST: I have a fixed income. What is the vaccination going to cost me?

COVID-19 vaccines are 100% free to all people in the United States. The vaccines are free because the federal government has agreed to pay back providers of COVID-19 vaccines (Source 36 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

COVID-19 vaccines are completely free to people with and without health insurance (Source 37 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

It is against the law for someone giving the vaccine to:

- Charge you money for a COVID-19 vaccine.
- Charge you money for any fees, co-pays, or coinsurance.
- Refuse to give you a vaccine because you have no health insurance or are out of network.
- Charge you money for an office visit if the only service was a COVID-19 vaccination.
- Require that you get any other services when receiving a COVID-19 vaccine.
- If you do get other services, those services can be billed as usual.
- People might tell you that you have to pay for your vaccine, but they are wrong.

You can also report the person or office to the Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, by calling 1-800-HHS-TIPS or the website [TIPS.HHS.GOV](https://www.tips.hhs.gov) (Source 38 - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021).

TRANSPORTATION: I don't have a car or don't drive. How am I supposed to get a vaccine?

- *Local CILs can add local transportation information here, additionally, if you are providing transportation assistance, share information here.*
- Uber is offering free rides to and from your vaccine through their partner, Go Go Grandparent. To book your ride, call (855) 921-0033, and make sure to tell the phone operator you're booking a ride for your vaccine.
- Lyft is offering free rides to and from vaccine appointments. Complete [this online screening](#) to find out if you qualify

ACCESSIBILITY: I'm worried I won't be able to access the vaccine site due to my disability.

What accessibility accommodations can I ask for as a person with a disability?

Because of the Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA, people with disabilities are guaranteed certain accommodations when getting their COVID-19 vaccine (Source 39 - Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990). These accommodations include:

- Vaccine sites that are accessible to people with physical disabilities.
- Access to American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters.
- Vaccine materials that include accessible formats, including:
 - Braille
 - Large print
 - Digital
 - Plain language/easy read

If you have a local disability advocacy resource, you can share that information here.

What are my rights to access vaccines?

People with disabilities have many laws that protect their rights. These rights mean that people cannot treat you badly just because of who you are as a person with a disability. You have the same rights to vaccines as people without disabilities.

- **The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** states that you cannot be treated unfairly because you have a disability. The ADA requires public and state agencies to provide accommodations, so people with disabilities have the same access to services as people without disabilities. The ADA also requires that agencies make sure that these accommodations are available for people with disabilities to get information in a way that meets their needs. This includes any type of equipment to provide services and accessible technology like websites (Source 39 - Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990).
- **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973** is a national law that protects people with disabilities from being treated unfairly because of their disability. This law applies to organizations that get financial assistance from any Federal department or agency. This includes many hospitals, nursing homes, mental health centers, and human service programs (Source 40 - Rehabilitation Act, 1973).
- **Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act** is a national law that states that federal agencies have to provide information in a way accessible to everyone with disabilities. If you need information differently because of your disability, federal agencies have to provide this (Source 41 - Rehabilitation Act, 1973).

- **Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act** states that you cannot be treated unfairly because of your race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. This includes making sure language assistance is available for people who speak limited English and making sure there are accommodations for people with disabilities to have access to services (Source 42 - Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, 2010)

Schedule your COVID-19 vaccine and booster shot:

The Disability Information and Access Line (DIAL) is now available to help people with disabilities get vaccinated. The DIAL's trained staff is standing by to:

- Help find local vaccination locations
- Assist with making vaccination appointments
- Connect callers to local services – such as accessible transportation – to overcome barriers to vaccination.

The hotline also can provide information and resources to answer questions and address concerns about the vaccines and can connect callers to information and services that promote independent living and address fundamental needs, such as food, housing, and transportation.

Call 888-677-1199 Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Eastern) - or - email DIAL@usaginganddisability.org

If you have a local disability scheduling resource, you can share that information here.

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