COVID-19 Vaccines - Answers to Common Questions

Definition

• COVID-19 vaccines have been approved by the FDA

• They are highly effective and safe.

• During the deadly pandemic of 2020, their arrival in 2021 restored hope of a return to normal. Their creation is a true miracle of medical research.

• **Updated: November 15, 2021** (version 5)

Trusted Websites for Accurate Answers to COVID-19 Questions

• There are current and future questions not addressed in this brief handout.

• In addition, some answers may change based on new studies and new data.

• When seeking answers to your questions, only use science-based websites. Here are some of the best:

• Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines.

• American Academy of Pediatrics website for parents: www.healthychildren.org

• Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) Vaccine Education Center website: https://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/vaccine-education-center

• Always follow the most current CDC recommendations if they are different than those in this document.

Care Advice

1. **Efficacy of the COVID-19 Vaccine:**

   • **Vaccine Efficacy.** All the vaccines approved by the FDA for use in the US are highly effective at preventing COVID-19. The protection against getting the new variants have gone down some. But, in those cases, most people have mild symptoms or none. The vaccines continue to prevent serious symptoms, complications and the need for hospital or ICU admission. This is even true for the variants, such as Delta. They work better than flu vaccines.

   • **Other Major Benefits.** Vaccines also prevent the rare serious delayed onset complications from COVID-19 infections that can occur in some people. One example is multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (also called MIS-C). Another is "long hauler" symptoms (such as brain fog or chronic breathing problems). Key: Vaccines prevent death and long-term complications from COVID-19 infections.

   • **Vaccines and Normal Life:** Having almost everyone vaccinated is the only way we can get back to normal. Normal means no masks, open schools, safe to travel, safe to visit grandparents, less mental health crisis and no deaths from COVID-19.

2. **Safety of the COVID-19 Vaccine:**

   • **Vaccine Safety.** Very safe based on tracking thousands of vaccinated people. Most people get a sore arm for a few days. About half get some general symptoms for about 24 hours, such as feeling tired and achy. A smaller number have a fever. These are the normal side effects seen with most vaccines and they go away quickly. They show your immune system is working. Serious reactions are extremely rare.

   • **Blood Clot Concerns**. Very rare. Occur in about 1 person per million vaccinated people. Blood clots occur much more commonly in people who get the natural COVID-19 infection. (Note: have NOT occurred with Moderna or Pfizer vaccines)

   • **Myocarditis Concerns:** Myocarditis is inflammation of the heart muscle. Main symptoms are chest pain and shortness of breath. Symptoms start within 1 week of getting the vaccine. Very rare side effect of the COVID-19 vaccines. Occurs in about 6 per million vaccinated people. Mainly in teen or young adult males. The symptoms are most often mild and go away quickly. Myocarditis occurs much more commonly in people who get the natural COVID-19 infection. Plus it is more severe in them.

   • **Best COVID Vaccine.** Any vaccine approved by the FDA is highly effective and safe. Get the first one that becomes available to you. It will protect you and your family.

   • **Vaccine Site.** Find a nearby vaccine site at vaccines.gov or call your doctor's office.

3. **Protection after the COVID-19 Vaccine:**

   • **Start of Vaccine Protection.** Full protection is reached about 2 weeks after you complete the vaccine series.

   • **Duration of Vaccine Protection.** Research data has confirmed that protection is still high at 6 months after completing the vaccine series (April 2021). Experts predict the protection may last for 12 months or longer, but we need to wait for more data.

   • **Booster Shots.** In November 2021, the CDC recommended a booster shot for all adults. For Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, booster shot needed if 6 or more months after the first ones. For Johnson and Johnson vaccine, booster shot needed if 2 or more months after the first one. Experts predict we may need a yearly booster, just like the flu vaccine.

4. **Reinfection after the COVID-19 Vaccine:**

   • **COVID-19 Variants and Vaccine Protection.** For now, the current vaccines help protect against the current variants in the US. The vaccinated person usually does not get infected. If they do, they usually have a mild illness or an infection with no symptoms. The vaccine protects against most serious symptoms, complications and hospitalizations. By contrast, natural immunity does not protect against some of the variants.

   • **Re-infections.** Reinfections can occur after natural infections. Vaccination provides much better protection against future infections.

   • **Quarantine after Exposure.** If you are vaccinated and 2 weeks have passed since your final dose, you do not have to quarantine for 10 days after close contact with a COVID-19 infected person. Fully vaccinated people with no symptoms should get tested 5 to 7 days after a COVID-19 exposure. You should also wear a mask (for 14 days) when you are around other people or until you know that your test result is negative.

5. **Special Patients and the COVID-19 Vaccine:**
   - **Children and Teens**. Safe and highly effective vaccines are available. Some vaccines are 2 doses, given 3-4 weeks apart. Others are single dose. Similar to flu shots, they will probably provide protection for 6 to 9 months. At this time, vaccines have been tested and are FDA approved for 5 years and older. Importance: while most children have mild or asymptomatic infections, they can get rare complications such as MIS-C. Also, they can innocently transmit the disease to others.
   - **Pregnant Women.** Vaccines are approved and safe.
   - **Breastfeeding Mothers.** Vaccines are approved and safe. Studies show that breastmilk passes vaccine antibody protection against COVID-19 to the baby.
   - **Underlying High Risk Conditions.** Vaccines are approved and safe. These patients need the vaccine protection the most. If you have questions about a specific condition, discuss with your doctor.
   - **Person Already had the Disease.** Get the vaccine. It provides higher levels of antibodies and better protection than the natural disease. Restriction: not approved until you are over any acute symptoms and the 10 days of isolation have passed.

6. **Reasons to Postpone a Scheduled COVID-19 Vaccine:**
   - **Positive COVID-19 Test.** Postpone until after the 10 day quarantine period is over and the symptoms are improving.
   - **Exposed to COVID-19, But No Symptoms.** Postpone until after the quarantine period is over.
   - **Child is Sick, But Has a Negative COVID-19 Test.** For moderate or severe illness (including a fever), postpone until fever gone and symptoms are improving. For mild symptoms (such as runny nose or mild diarrhea without fever), can receive the vaccine. This is true for most vaccines.

Call Your Doctor Back If...

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- You have other questions or concerns

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