

Getting to Know the COVID-19 Vaccines

Talk to your
pharmacist or other
trusted health care
professional if you
have any questions or
need more information
about COVID-19
vaccines.

The Vaccines Are Safe and Effective

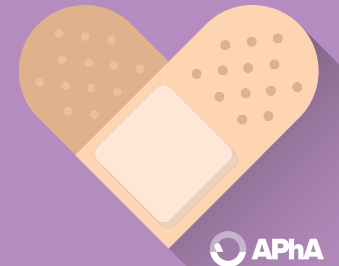
All of the COVID-19 vaccines teach our body how to recognize the virus that causes COVID-19 and how to fight it off. That's how the vaccines help to protect us from severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19.

Each type of vaccine takes a slightly different approach to teaching our body how to recognize the virus. But they all are safe and effective. And we know they are effective among people of diverse age, sex, race, and ethnicity categories and among people with underlying medical conditions.

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 **VaccineConfident**

There are several types of vaccines available for use in the United States to prevent COVID-19:

- > **Messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines.** The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine (COMIRNATY) and the Moderna vaccine (SPIKEVAX) are examples of mRNA vaccines. The mRNA vaccines are preferred for most people.
- > **Viral vector vaccines.** The Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine is an example of a viral vector vaccine.
- > **Protein subunit vaccines.** The Novavax vaccine is an example of a protein subunit vaccine with an adjuvant. An adjuvant is an ingredient used in some vaccines to help create a stronger immune response in people receiving the vaccine.

Information about COVID-19 vaccines continues to evolve. To see the latest information and recommendations, scan the QR code with your smartphone camera or visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/>



Terms You Should Know

It is helpful to know some of the terms the CDC uses when talking about COVID-19 vaccines.

The initial shots you receive are referred to as the *primary series*. For example, the primary series of an mRNA vaccine usually consists of two shots administered several weeks apart. The primary series for the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen viral vector vaccine usually consists of just one shot.

Moderately or severely immunocompromised people may need to get an additional shot to complete the primary series. For example, the primary series of an mRNA vaccine for immunocompromised people would consist of three shots instead of two.

You are considered to be *fully vaccinated* (or *fully immunized*) after you receive all of the shots in the primary series and your body has time to develop immunity—usually 2 weeks after the last shot.

A *booster shot* is a dose of vaccine administered at some point—for example, several months—after the primary series is completed. Booster shots are recommended for most people because studies have shown that vaccine effectiveness against infections may decrease over time.

You are considered to be up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines if you have received all currently recommended doses, including any booster doses.

Some Important Points

- > The CDC recommends staying with the same vaccine for all doses in the primary series. For example, if you receive the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for your first shot, then you should also get the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for your second shot (and third shot if you are immunocompromised).
- > In general, the most common side effects are the same for all of the vaccines. You may have pain, redness, or swelling in the arm where you got the shot. Or you may experience flu-like symptoms such as tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, fever, and nausea.
- > If your primary series consists of more than one shot, the side effects after your second shot may be more intense than the ones you experienced after your first shot.

