

### What is in the COVID vaccine and how does it work?

Vaccines work with your immune system so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. There are currently four vaccines that are available in the U.S.: **Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna (mRNA vaccines), Johnson&Johnson (vector vaccine), and Novavax (subunit protein vaccine)**. mRNA vaccines provide instructions to make a protein that the body recognizes as COVID-19 without actually introducing COVID-19 into the body. The body then produces antibodies to that specific protein.

A Vector vaccine uses a harmless adenovirus to deliver a gene that carries the blueprint for the spiky protein found on the surface of the coronavirus. The virus enters cells, which then follow the genetic instructions to construct a replica of the coronavirus spike. Your immune system will use these replicas to recognize and respond to the actual coronavirus.

The Novavax COVID-19 vaccine contains a protein (made using moth cells) plus an adjuvant (made from tree bark). An adjuvant is an ingredient added to boost a person's immune response, creating higher levels of antibodies. Novavax directly injects a version of the spike protein, along with another ingredient that also stimulates the immune system, into the body, leading to the production of antibodies and T-cells.

None of the vaccines contain either live or weakened virus – **you cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine**. The Moderna vaccine requires 2 doses given 4 weeks apart; the Pfizer vaccine requires 2 doses given 3 weeks apart. Johnson & Johnson is a single dose vaccine. Novavax requires 2 doses given 3-8 weeks apart. There are no preservatives in the vaccines.

**Please remember that although the disease COVID-19 can be deadly, the vaccines, which contain no live viruses, are NOT. Vaccines are designed to protect us from life-threatening illness.**

### Is the vaccine effective? How long will it protect those who get the vaccine?

In clinical trials involving 75,000+ people, the vaccines were nearly 95% effective in people who received two doses. This means the chances of contracting COVID-19 after receiving two doses of the vaccine is decreased by 95%.

The vaccine prevented severe COVID-19 infections in all individuals who received it. The length of protection is not yet known. Studies are ongoing to determine if booster doses of the vaccine will be needed in the future.

### Is the vaccine safe?

**Yes.** No severe effects have been reported in any individuals who received the vaccine.

### What are possible side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine?

The most common side effects include pain and redness at the injection site, fatigue (tiredness), -headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain and low-grade fever. These side effects are the same symptoms experienced by many after getting a flu or tetanus vaccine. Experiencing some minor symptoms after receiving a vaccine can be reassuring that your body is responding appropriately to it and preparing to protect you from the illness itself.

### Can the vaccine give someone COVID-19?

No. The vaccine contains no live or weakened virus, and therefore someone cannot contract COVID-19 from the vaccine.

### If you have already had COVID-19, should you get the vaccine?

Yes. It is not yet known how effective natural immunity is from having COVID-19 disease, or how long immunity lasts. Receiving the vaccine cannot hurt. The vaccine can only help boost immunity against COVID-19.

### If am experiencing prolonged symptoms from COVID-19, should I get the vaccine?

Receiving the vaccine will likely not harm you and could potentially be helpful. However, depending on your health situation, you may need to more carefully weigh the risks of vaccine side effects. Please consult with your health care provider about your individual safety and health concerns.

### Who can get the vaccine?

The goal is for everyone to be able to easily get vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as large enough quantities are available. You can check out Connecticut's guidelines for who is eligible for the vaccine [here](#).

### Should women who are pregnant, planning to become pregnant in the coming months, or breastfeeding receive the vaccine?

COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for all people aged 6 months and older. This includes people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, trying to get pregnant now, or those who might become pregnant in the future. If you are pregnant or were recently pregnant, you are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19 compared to people who are not pregnant. Additionally, if you have COVID-19 during pregnancy, you are at increased risk of complications that can affect your pregnancy and developing baby. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine can help protect you and your baby from serious health problems from COVID-19.

### Can people who are immunocompromised receive the vaccine?

While these vaccines have not been specifically studied in individuals who are immunocompromised/immunosuppressed and it is not known exactly how efficacious they will be (if immunocompromised individuals mount the same response as others receiving the vaccine), immunocompromised individuals are at higher risk for complications from COVID19 illness.

There are no recommendations that patients who are immunocompromised should not get vaccinated.

- The clinical trials contained individuals with immunocompromising conditions.
- The vaccine does not contain live or weakened virus, and therefore, it cannot cause a COVID19 infection in someone with a weakened immune system.
- It is important that immunocompromised individuals practice other strategies to reduce transmission (hand washing, mask use, social distancing) even after vaccination.

### Can we stop wearing masks once we have been vaccinated?

**No.** Not everyone will be vaccinated and we must wear masks to protect vulnerable individuals at this time. The risk for SARS-CoV-2 infection in fully vaccinated people cannot be completely eliminated as long as there is continued community transmission of the virus. Infections with the Delta variant in vaccinated persons potentially have reduced transmissibility than infections in unvaccinated persons, although additional studies are needed.

### What if I am in quarantine when I am offered the vaccination?

To protect others, you must wait until after your quarantine period ends to get vaccinated.

### What if I am sick with COVID-19 or another acute respiratory illness during the time period offered?

You should wait until you are completely better before receiving the vaccine.

### Can people with allergies get the vaccine?

Yes, the vaccine has been shown to be safe for people with environmental, food, insect and even latex allergies, as well as those allergic to any medications given by mouth. Special considerations are made for anyone with **a history of vaccine allergy OR allergy to any medications that were injected into the body.**

Please consult with your health care provider if you have any concerns.