

## Frequently Asked Questions

### WHEN IS THE COVID-19 VACCINE GOING TO BE AVAILABLE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC?

The first New Yorkers to receive the vaccine will be hospital workers, nursing home residents and nursing home staff, as well as certain other frontline providers. According to Governor Cuomo, the rest of the general public will get the vaccine after these high-priority groups. *It will take six to nine months before enough people have gotten the shots to begin seriously curbing the pandemic.*

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF GETTING A COVID-19 VACCINE?

COVID-19 can cause severe medical complications and lead to death in some people. Getting a vaccine can help protect you by creating an antibody response in your body without your having to become infected with the virus. *The vaccine might prevent you from getting COVID-19 or keep you from becoming seriously ill if you do get the virus.*

### WHAT COVID-19 VACCINES HAVE BEEN APPROVED AND HOW DO THEY WORK?

While there are several COVID-19 vaccines in clinical trials, the two that are currently approved for emergency use are the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine (the Pfizer vaccine) and the Moderna vaccine. The Pfizer vaccine requires two injections given 21 days apart. Data has shown that this *vaccine is safe* and starts working soon after the first dose and has an efficacy rate of 95% seven days after the second dose. The Moderna vaccine also requires two injections given 28 days apart and *data has shown that the vaccine is also safe and has an efficacy rate of 94%.*

### ARE THE TWO SHOTS DIFFERENT?

Studies indicate both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are very similar in profile and efficacy. There is no difference between the components of the first and second dose, regardless of the vaccine given.

### WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF A COVID-19 VACCINE?

The studies for both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines showed no serious adverse effects. Since the introduction of the vaccine, rare serious allergic reactions have occurred, which can be managed by the vaccination team. In both trials (which included an average of two months of follow-up), vaccine recipients have reported mild to moderate symptoms including:

- Pain, redness or swelling where the shot was given
- Fever
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Chills
- Joint pain

Most reactions happen within the first few days after vaccination and last no more than three days. If you have a reaction that prevents you from being able to eat, sleep or work, contact your physician.

### CAN I CATCH COVID-19 FROM THE VACCINE?

No. Neither the Pfizer or the Moderna COVID-19 vaccines contain the live virus that causes COVID-19 – *so you cannot catch COVID-19 from these vaccines.* With this type of vaccine, your body is in a sense “tricked” into thinking it has the virus. Your immune system will recognize that the protein created by the vaccine doesn’t belong there and begin building an immune response and making antibodies. Keep in mind that it will take a few weeks for your body to build immunity after getting a COVID-19 vaccination. As a result, it’s possible that you could become infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or after being vaccinated.

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### **IS THERE ANYONE WHO SHOULD NOT GET A COVID-19 VACCINE?**

The COVID-19 vaccine is not being offered to children under 16. Also, if you are allergic to any component of the vaccine, you should not get vaccinated. Please ask your doctor about the ingredients in each vaccine to make sure you are not allergic. Additionally, it is important to note that researchers excluded pregnant women from their studies so there is little information on how the COVID-19 vaccination can affect pregnant women or their babies. Pregnant women may be offered the vaccine; however, they should first discuss it with their doctor.

### **SHOULD I GET THE VACCINE EVEN IF I'VE ALREADY HAD COVID-19?**

Getting COVID-19 might offer some natural protection or immunity from reinfection, but it's not clear how long this protection lasts. Because reinfection is possible and COVID-19 can cause severe medical complications, it is recommended that people who have already had COVID-19 get vaccinated. However, the CDC advises that you wait 90 days after your initial COVID-19 symptoms before being vaccinated.

### **SHOULD I GET THE VACCINE IF I HAVE SEVERE ALLERGIES?**

Yes. If you have a history of significant allergies (i.e. someone who carries an epi pen), let the person providing the vaccine know and have them observe you an extended period of time once you have received the vaccine. If you are allergic to any component of the vaccine, do not get vaccinated.

### **SHOULD I GET THE VACCINE IF I AM UNDERGOING CANCER TREATMENTS?**

Yes. There are no indications that the vaccine has a negative impact on cancer patients.

### **CAN I STOP TAKING SAFETY PRECAUTIONS AFTER GETTING A COVID-19 VACCINE?**

No. Experts want to learn more about the protection that a COVID-19 vaccine provides and how long immunity lasts before changing safety recommendations. The CDC continues to recommend that you avoid close contact with others, wear masks in public places and wash your hands frequently.

### **WILL I GET PROOF OF VACCINATION?**

When you receive your vaccination, you will receive a vaccination card or printout that tells you which COVID-19 vaccine you received, the date you received it, and where you received it.

### **HOW MUCH WILL THE VACCINE COST?**

Federal health officials have said that there will be no out-of-pocket costs when receiving the vaccine.

**To learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine, visit the CDC's vaccination website at: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html)**