

FACTS ABOUT THE COVID-19 VACCINE

Updated January, 2022

What do vaccines do?

When a vaccine for a virus is injected, the body creates antibodies to fight the virus. It then fights the virus if you are ever exposed to it in the future.



Can the vaccine give me the virus?

NO
There is no way to get COVID-19 from the vaccines.

What does the vaccine cost?

The vaccine is **FREE** to everyone.

You may be asked to provide information about your insurance. This is because providers can receive reimbursement for a vaccination fee.

How do these vaccines work?

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are mRNA vaccines. Johnson & Johnson (J &J) is an adenovirus vaccine.

- The virus has proteins on the surface of the virus.
- All 3 vaccines tell your body to temporarily make this protein so your body reacts and makes antibodies and other immune responses to the protein.
- If you get exposed to the virus, your body will now recognize and attack this protein that is on the surface of the virus. In this way it destroys the virus.
- The COVID-19 vaccines **DO NOT** enter or change your DNA.

Will the vaccines work for new strains of the virus?

Experts think it's likely all three vaccines will be effective against all currently circulating strains of the coronavirus/COVID-19. Scientists and vaccine makers are continuing to monitor this issue.

How effective are the COVID-19 vaccines?

Even with new variants, the COVID-19 vaccines are still very effective.

Vaccinated people are much less likely to test positive for COVID-19, to be hospitalized for COVID-19, and to die from COVID-19 compared to people without the vaccine.

LESS THAN

1%

In Massachusetts, **less than 1%** of people who have been vaccinated have been hospitalized because of COVID-19 and even fewer have died from COVID-19.



Has the development of the vaccine been rushed?

NO

Scientists have been developing the technology behind these vaccines for more than 10 years. Scientists, companies and governments came together to develop vaccines to prevent more people from getting sick. Tens of thousands of people volunteered to test them.

Side effects of the vaccines



Side effects are expected and are a sign that the vaccine is working.

- **Common side effects:** mild pain, redness and swelling in the arm that the vaccine was administered.
- **May also experience:** fatigue/tiredness, chills, joint pain, headache or a low-grade fever.
 - The side effects seem to be worse after the second dose of the vaccine is administered and last about 24 hours but can last a few days.
 - These side effects are expected and are a sign that the vaccine is working.

Severe side effects are rare.

If they happen, they would typically appear in the first 15 to 30 minutes after getting the vaccine. A possible severe side effect is anaphylaxis or trouble breathing, a severe allergic reaction. This is more likely to happen to people who have a history of this type of reaction to vaccines.

Should pregnant women get the vaccine?



- The virus seems to cause more harm in pregnant women than in those of the same age who are not pregnant.
- Currently, **all vaccines are recommended** for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding.
 - The risks are thought to be small, but are not totally known.
 - It is a personal choice. Talk with your health care provider.
- Even if you get the vaccine, it is important to wear masks, wash hands, and physically distance when caring for yourself and your baby.

YES

Should people who have health conditions get the COVID-19 vaccine?

(i.e., hypertension, diabetes, sickle cell disease, cancer)

- It is safe for people with health conditions.
- Talk with your provider about your concerns before getting the vaccine.
- It is important that people with health conditions get the vaccine. Research shows they are more likely to develop severe disease if they develop COVID-19.

I would like to wait to get the vaccine to see what happens with other people.

Please get the vaccine as soon as it is available to you.

The vaccines have been tested on tens of thousands of people. We know that the vaccines are safe and effective. You are not being asked to participate in a study. The studies have already been done.

Why are boosters recommended?



Studies show that protection from COVID-19 vaccines wears off because antibody levels decrease over time. Boosters are needed for the best protection against COVID-19 and the Omicron variant.

For up-to-date information on COVID-19, vaccines and booster schedules, visit:

[cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html)

[mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine](https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine)

Endorsing Groups: City of Worcester • UMass Medical School • Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center • Family Health Center of Worcester • St. Vincent Hospital • Fallon Health • Reliant Medical Group



What about kids?

The Pfizer vaccine is approved for children who are age **5** and older.

I have already had COVID-19. Should I still get the vaccine?

YES

You should wait until you are completely recovered.



What if I have a history of bad reactions to vaccines?

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People with a history of anaphylaxis to these vaccines or to ingredients in these vaccines should not be vaccinated.

However, people with a history of anaphylaxis to other vaccines, medications or foods should get the vaccine.

- Get the vaccine in a facility prepared to deal with an anaphylactic reaction.
- People with a history of anaphylaxis should talk to their health care provider and notify the vaccine center of their history of anaphylaxis before getting the vaccine.

