

# COVID-19 FAQs

## EDUCATION RESOURCES FOR BLACK COMMUNITIES

Here are some of the most frequently asked questions we've heard from Black Americans. These questions have been vetted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). To learn more and to get the most up-to-date information, please visit [GetVaccineAnswers.org](https://www.getvaccineanswers.org)

### FAQS

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## 1. WHY SHOULD I GET VACCINATED?

Getting immunized against COVID-19 will keep most people from getting sick. Even in a rare case where one does catch the virus, a vaccine will likely prevent you from becoming seriously ill.

Protecting yourself also protects the people around you, like those at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 or those who can't get vaccinated — like infants, children or people with weakened immune systems from things like chemotherapy for cancer.

## 2. ARE THE COVID-19 VACCINES SAFE?

Yes. Researchers began developing vaccines for COVID-19 in January 2020, based on decades of understanding immune response and how vaccines work.

### Are mRNA vaccines safe?

Yes. mRNA vaccines have been in development for years and have been proven to be safe and effective. They build immune protection by copying the shape of the virus without actually including a piece of the virus itself.

mRNA stands for messenger ribonucleic acid and can most easily be described as instructions for how to make a protein, or even just a piece of a protein.

mRNA is not able to alter our genetic makeup (DNA). The mRNA from a COVID-19 vaccine does not affect or interact with our DNA in any way. Instead, COVID-19 vaccines that use mRNA work with the body's natural defenses to safely develop immunity to disease.

**As of August 2021, FDA has fully approved a COVID-19 vaccine.**

## 3. WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FULL FDA APPROVAL AND EMERGENCY USE AUTHORIZATION?

Full FDA approval takes longer than Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). More data needs to be processed

and reviewed over a longer period of time. When the FDA fully approves a product, patients can be sure the approval is based on large amounts of scientific data.

In some emergencies, the FDA issues an EUA to give access to critical medical products because no approved products are available. This has been the case with the COVID-19 public health emergency, which is why vaccines were first available under an EUA.

## 4. CAN I CATCH COVID-19 FROM THE VACCINES?

No, it's not possible to get COVID-19 from the current FDA-authorized vaccines.

## 5. ARE THERE SIDE EFFECTS FROM THE VACCINES?

It's normal to experience some mild discomfort following a vaccine. This means it's working and creating an immune response in your body.

You may feel soreness or experience some swelling in your arm. You may also feel tired, have a headache, fever, or chills.

These symptoms may impact your daily activities, but they shouldn't last more than 2-3 days. If they continue or get worse, call your doctor, nurse, or clinic.

## 6. IF I HAVE SIDE EFFECTS LIKE SWELLING IN MY ARM, FEELING TIRED, HEADACHES OR A FEVER OR CHILLS, HOW LONG COULD THESE SYMPTOMS LAST?

These symptoms may impact your daily activities, but they shouldn't last more than 2-3 days. If they continue or get worse, call your doctor, nurse, or clinic.

## 7. COULD I HAVE AN ALLERGIC REACTION?

Severe allergic reactions to vaccines are extremely rare. The FDA says the authorized COVID-19 vaccines appear to be safe for people with common food or environmental allergies.

If you have had an immediate allergic reaction — even if it was not severe — to a vaccine or injectable therapy for another disease, ask your doctor if you should get a COVID-19 vaccine. Your doctor will help you decide if it is safe for you to get vaccinated.

## 8. DID THE COVID-19 VACCINE CLINICAL TRIAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS INCLUDE BLACK AMERICANS LIKE ME?

Researchers made sure that the trials included adults of diverse backgrounds, races, ethnicities, and geographic areas. They collaborated with faith leaders, community organizations, and health clinics to reach volunteers from many different walks of life across the United States.

Medical experts and doctors want to make sure the vaccines work safely and effectively for as many people as possible. People may respond differently to vaccines based on factors like age, gender, and health conditions — so it is important to have a diverse group of participants in clinical trials. COVID-19 has hit hard in the Black and Hispanic communities. Historically, these populations haven't always been included in clinical research, but with COVID-19 vaccines researchers made sure volunteers included people of color, as well as people over the age of 65 who are at higher risk of complications from the virus.

At this time, the studies do not include pregnant women or young children, but testing with those groups will likely begin in the near future. Pregnant women who get infected with COVID-19 disease are more likely to have severe disease.

People who are pregnant and part of a group recommended to receive COVID-19 vaccine,

such as healthcare personnel, may choose to be vaccinated. A conversation between pregnant patients and their clinicians may help them decide whether to get vaccinated.

See “What groups of people will be included in the real-world vaccine assessments?” for more information (CDC) by clicking here (URL Below) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/effectiveness.html>

## 9. HOW DO THESE VACCINES PROTECT ME?

When we get a vaccine, it activates our immune response. This helps our bodies learn to fight off the virus without the danger of an actual infection. If we are exposed to the virus in the future, our immune system “remembers” how to fight it.

The Moderna and Pfizer vaccines use messenger RNA, or mRNA. mRNA vaccines do not contain a live virus — they give our bodies “instructions” for how to make and fight the harmless spike-shaped proteins that will protect against a COVID-19 infection. While these vaccines use new technology, researchers have been studying them for decades.

The Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine is a viral vector vaccine and also does not contain a live virus. It uses a harmless adenovirus to create a spike protein that the immune system responds to, creating antibodies to protect against COVID-19. As of April 13, CDC and FDA have recommended a pause in the use of the Johnson and Johnson's Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine in the United States out of an abundance of caution. Doctors and other health experts are reviewing the specifics and will continue to provide the latest information.

## 10. SHOULD I GET VACCINATED IF I'VE ALREADY HAD COVID-19?

If you've had COVID-19 in the past 90 days, talk to your doctor about when you should get vaccinated. People who have already had COVID-19 should still eventually get vaccinated to ensure they are protected.

Over the next few months, with more and more people getting vaccinated, we will find out more about how the vaccines protect people who have already had COVID-19.

COVID-19 vaccination should be offered to you regardless of whether you already had COVID-19 infection. You should not be required to have an antibody test before you are vaccinated.

However, anyone currently infected with COVID-19 should wait to get vaccinated until after their illness has resolved and after they have met the criteria to discontinue isolation.

### 11. HOW LONG DOES THE COVID-19 VACCINE LAST?

Immunization against COVID-19 will help protect you for the near future, but it's still not clear how long the protection will last. We will have a clearer picture of how long immunity lasts in years to come when we have collected more data.

Both natural immunity and immunity from the vaccine are important ways to fight COVID-19 that experts are trying to learn more about, and places like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will keep the public informed as new evidence becomes available.

### 12. ARE THE COVID-19 VACCINES FREE?

There shouldn't be a cost to get vaccinated. Insurance providers will cover the cost of the vaccine, and the U.S. government has set up a system to cover costs for those who do not have insurance.

Vaccine doses bought by the U.S. government will be given to the public for free, however, vaccination providers will be able to charge an administration fee for giving the shot to someone. Vaccine providers can get this fee reimbursed by the patient's public or private insurance company or, for uninsured patients, by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund.

### 13. HOW WILL THE COVID-19 VACCINES AFFECT ME IF I HAVE PRE-EXISTING MEDICAL CONDITIONS?

People with underlying medical conditions can receive the FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines. In fact, vaccination is especially important for adults of any age with certain underlying medical conditions, like diabetes and high blood pressure, because they are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Ask your doctor if you have specific questions.

### 14. I HAVE LUPUS. CAN I TAKE THE VACCINES?

People with autoimmune conditions may receive a COVID-19 vaccine. However, they should consult with their doctor, nurse or other health provider to discuss whether to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

### 15. DO I STILL NEED TO WEAR A MASK ONCE I'M FULLY VACCINATED?

If you're fully vaccinated, you can safely resume many activities without having to wear a mask or stay six feet away from others—unless required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws or regulations, including business and workplace guidance.

If you travel, you should still take steps to protect yourself and others. You must still wear a mask on planes, buses, trains, and other forms of public transportation traveling into, within, or out of the United States, and in U.S. transportation hubs such as airports and stations.

CDC is continuing to update guidelines as more information becomes available, so please visit their website for the latest recommendations.

## 16. WHAT DO I SAY TO THOSE CLOSE TO ME THAT DO NOT WANT ME TO TAKE THE VACCINE?

If there are individuals around you that are encouraging you not to take the vaccine, it is important to focus on “facts over fear”.

For the Black Community, the virus has a more devastating effect than the vaccine in regards to death and hospitalization. In order to make the best decision for you, it is important to be proactive in getting the facts from trusted sources including the CDC, [getvaccineanswers.org](https://www.getvaccineanswers.org), [blackcommunityvaccinetoolkit.org](https://blackcommunityvaccinetoolkit.org), and health care providers.

## 17. WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT THE JOHNSON AND JOHNSON VACCINE?

After pausing the use of Johnson & Johnson’s Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine, the CDC and FDA have recommended that the use of Johnson & Johnson vaccine resume in the United States.

At this time, the available data suggest that the chance of severe adverse reactions such as rare blood clots with low platelets is very low. However, women younger than 50 years old should be aware of the rare risk of blood clots with low platelets after receiving the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine. This risk has not been seen with other COVID-19 vaccines that are available.

No reports of blood clots with low platelets have been reported with the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines, with more than 180 million doses of those vaccines already having been administered in the United States. COVID-19 vaccines have undergone and will continue to undergo the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history. COVID-19 vaccine safety is a top priority for the federal government, and all reports of health problems following COVID-19 vaccination are taken very seriously.

## 18. AS A BLACK LEADER OR INFLUENCER, HOW CAN I HELP EDUCATE MY COMMUNITY?

Start by getting the facts from trusted sources including the CDC, [getvaccineanswers.org](https://www.getvaccineanswers.org), [blackcommunityvaccinetoolkit.org](https://blackcommunityvaccinetoolkit.org), and health care providers.

You can also share these trusted sources with your organization and social media followers, helping them make informed decisions for themselves.

## 19. DO VACCINES IMPACT FERTILITY?

There is currently no evidence that any vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, cause fertility problems. If you are trying to become pregnant now or want to get pregnant in the future, you may receive a COVID-19 vaccine when one is available to you.

For more resources to make informed decisions about COVID-19 visit [Blackcommunityvaccinetoolkit.org](https://blackcommunityvaccinetoolkit.org)