

# Pfizer and Moderna vaccine FAQs

## ▶ Are the vaccines safe?

The **Food and Drug Administration** (FDA) must verify that the vaccines are safe and can prevent COVID-19. The FDA can authorize the use of vaccine under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA), which it has done for the vaccines from **Pfizer** and **Moderna**.

In the studies looking at the vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna, each vaccine had a side-effect profile similar to other vaccines, like the flu vaccine. It is recommended that if you have a severe (anaphylaxis) reaction to another vaccine or injectable medication that you do not get this vaccine without talking with your doctor first.

## ▶ What type of vaccine will be used?

Two of the three COVID-19 vaccines that have been authorized by the FDA are **messenger RNA** (mRNA) vaccines. mRNA vaccines teach your cells how to make a protein that triggers an immune response inside your body, allowing your body to fight the COVID-19 virus.

## ▶ How many doses of the vaccine are required?

The currently approved mRNA vaccines require two doses given either 21 or 28 days apart, depending on the vaccine brand. **Both doses must be the same brand of vaccine.**

## ▶ What are the short-term, expected effects of the vaccines?

Some participants experienced common side effects in the vaccine trials, like a sore arm, warmth in the arm, malaise, fatigue or a low-grade fever. These side effects typically only lasted a few hours. Not everyone will experience these effects to the same degree.

▶ **What are the long-term side-effects of the vaccines?**

It is unknown at this time if there are any long-term effects of the current vaccines. The FDA and vaccine manufacturers are continuing to monitor the vaccines' long-term safety; this is a normal process for all new medications.

▶ **Can the vaccines give me COVID-19 when administered?**

No. mRNA vaccines cannot cause COVID-19.

▶ **Do I need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others if I have received two doses of the vaccine?**

Yes. It is still important for everyone to continue to cover their mouth and nose with a mask, wash their hands often, and stay at least six feet away from others.

▶ **How long after the second dose should I consider myself immune?**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, immunity to COVID-19 should be very strong one to two weeks after the second dose.

▶ **If I have had both doses, and no known exposure, can I safely be around high-risk, nonvaccinated people?**

Until we have further information, we do not recommend being around high-risk, nonvaccinated individuals.

▶ **Can children receive the vaccines?**

The Pfizer vaccine is approved for kids 16 years of age and older. The Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines are approved for adults 18 years of age and older.

▶ **Is it safe for pregnant women to get the vaccines?**

The vaccines were not studied in pregnant women; however, the **American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine** recommend that COVID-19 vaccines should not be withheld from pregnant individuals. If you are pregnant, we recommend consulting with your obstetrician or primary care physician for any specific questions or concerns that you may have.

▶ **How do the vaccines affect those who have an autoimmune disease?**

People with autoimmune conditions may receive any authorized COVID-19 vaccine. It is possible that they may have a diminished immune response, but the consensus of numerous professional societies is that people with autoimmune disease are at higher risk for severe COVID, and that they stand to benefit greatly from vaccination.

▶ **Can I receive the vaccine if I've had COVID-19?**

Yes, you can still receive the vaccine if you have had COVID-19. At minimum, you should wait until you have recovered from being sick and you are out of isolation.

▶ **If you have had COVID-19, do you still need the vaccine?**

Yes. Having COVID-19 is likely to give you some degree of natural immunity against reinfection, but we can not be sure how robust that protection will be because the immune response is variable in different people, and so is the degree to which they were infected in the first place. Vaccination is calibrated to a dose that will provoke an effective immune response in all recipients, and so will more consistently protect us for a longer period of time.

▶ **Will we need to receive the COVID-19 vaccine annually like the flu vaccine?**

This will be influenced by many factors, and it is too early to know for sure.

▶ **How will those administering the vaccine know if individuals have chronic conditions?**

We are asking Individuals to self-identify if they have chronic conditions. We want to make sure everyone at a higher risk of getting COVID-19 can access the vaccine, including those who do not have access to a healthcare provider and do not have documented chronic conditions.

▶ **What determines which COVID-19 vaccine an individual will receive?**

At this time, we receive our vaccine allocations from the state of Virginia. Vaccine availability will determine which vaccine a person will receive.

▶ **Does Novant Health UVA Health System have freezers to store the vaccines?**

Yes, Novant Health UVA Health System has the right freezers to store both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines safely.

▶ **Is the injection taken while the solution/vaccine is cold?**

Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines will be at room temperature when given.

▶ **For vaccines that require two doses, what is being done to ensure adequate supplies for the second dose?**

We are coordinating closely with the state to ensure second doses when we have scheduled the first doses.

▶ **Can people choose which vaccine they want to get?**

Given the limited amount of vaccine supply available, people are not able to choose the type of vaccine they will receive. All vaccines currently available are safe and protect people against COVID-19. Regardless of which vaccine you receive, you will be better protected than if you did not receive a vaccine. The most important thing right now is to get as many people vaccinated using the vaccines available. Herd immunity will better protect people in our communities.