CDC Foundation
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Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the COVID-19 Delta variant and am I at risk?

- COVID-19, like most viruses, constantly change and become more diverse.
- The Delta variant is highly contagious, nearly twice as contagious as previous variants.
- The greatest risk of transmission is among unvaccinated people who are much more likely to contract, and therefore transmit the virus.
- Fully vaccinated people with Delta variant breakthrough infections can spread the virus to others. However, vaccinated people appear to be infectious for a shorter period. This means fully vaccinated people are likely infectious for less time than unvaccinated people.
- The best way to protect yourself against COVID-19, including the Delta Variant, is to get vaccinated. Find a COVID-19 vaccine.

2. What do I need to know about COVID-19 vaccinations?

- COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective.
- You may have side effects after vaccination, but these are normal.
- It typically takes two weeks after you are fully vaccinated for the body to build protection (immunity) against the virus that causes COVID-19.
- Vaccines are widely available in the United States. Find a COVID-19 vaccine.
- People who have been fully vaccinated can start to do some things that they had stopped doing because of the pandemic.

3. Will I need a COVID-19 booster?

- Booster shots are not currently available. The Department of Health and Human Services announced a plan to begin offering COVID-19 booster shots this fall.
- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) are conducting an independent evaluation to determine the safety and effectiveness of a booster dose.

- The goal is for people to start receiving a COVID-19 booster shot beginning in the fall, with individuals being eligible starting 8 months after they received their second dose of an mRNA vaccine (either Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna).

4. Which COVID-19 vaccine is the best?

The best COVID-19 vaccine is the first one that is available to you. Do not wait for a specific brand. All currently authorized and recommended COVID-19 vaccines:

- are safe,
- are effective and
- reduce your risk of severe illness.

CDC does not recommend one vaccine over another.

Currently, three vaccines are authorized and recommended in the United States to prevent COVID-19:

- Pfizer-BioNTech
- Moderna
- Johnson & Johnson / Janssen

In August 2021, the FDA fully approved the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for individuals 16 and older. Along with the other two vaccines, the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine continues to be available under emergency use authorization (EUA), including for individuals 12 through 15 years of age.

5. How do I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Find a COVID-19 Vaccine: Search vaccines.gov, text your zip code to 438829, or call 1-800-232-0233 to find locations near you.

There are several ways you can look for vaccination providers near you.

- Visit Vaccines.gov to find vaccination providers near you. Learn more about COVID-19 Vaccination locations.
- Text your zip code to 438829 or call 1-800-232-0233 to find vaccine locations near you.
- Check your local pharmacy's website to see if vaccination appointments are available. Find out which pharmacies are participating in the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program.
- Contact your state health department to find additional vaccination locations in the area.

- Check your local news outlets. They may have information on how to get a vaccination appointment.

6. How do COVID-19 vaccines work?

COVID-19 vaccines help our bodies develop immunity to the virus that causes COVID-19 without us having to actually get the illness.

Different types of vaccines work in different ways to offer protection. But with all types of vaccines, the body is left with a supply of "memory" T-lymphocytes as well as B-lymphocytes that will remember how to fight that virus in the future.

It typically takes a few weeks after vaccination for the body to produce T-lymphocytes and B-lymphocytes. Therefore, it is possible that a person could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and then gets sick because the vaccine did not have enough time to provide protection.

Sometimes after vaccination, the process of building immunity can cause symptoms, such as fever. These symptoms are normal and are signs that the body is building immunity.

Learn more about how vaccines work from CDC.

7. Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?

- The vaccines are highly effective in preventing illness—even more effective than the annual flu vaccine.
- The COVID-19 vaccine will help protect you from getting sick.
- The quickest way for life to return to normal is for most people to get vaccinated.
- Nearly all doctors who have been offered the vaccine have taken it. Millions of people have been vaccinated safely.
- Tens of thousands of people participated in the phase 3 trials for the three authorized vaccines. After being fully vaccinated, no trial participants were hospitalized or died from COVID-19.

8. Is it safe for pregnant people to get the COVID vaccine?

Pregnant people are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19

Although the overall risk of severe illness is low, pregnant people are at an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19 when compared with non-pregnant people. Severe illness includes illness that requires hospitalization, intensive care, or a ventilator or special equipment to breathe or illness that results in death. Additionally, pregnant people with COVID-19 might be at increased risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes, such as preterm birth, compared with pregnant women without COVID-19.

Experts Believe COVID-19 Vaccines are Unlikely to Pose a Risk for People who are Pregnant

Based on how these vaccines work in the body, experts believe they are unlikely to pose a risk for people who are pregnant. However, there is currently limited data on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in pregnant people.

- COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for all people 12 years and older, including people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, trying to get pregnant now, or might become pregnant in the future.
- Evidence about the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy has been growing. These data suggest that the benefits of receiving a COVID-19 vaccine outweigh any known or potential risks of vaccination during pregnancy.
- There is currently no evidence that any vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, cause fertility problems in women or men.
- Pregnant and recently pregnant people are more likely to get severely ill with COVID-19 compared with non-pregnant people.
- Getting a COVID-19 vaccine can protect you from severe illness from COVID-19.

If you are pregnant and receive a COVID-19 vaccine, consider participating in the v-safe pregnancy registry

If you are pregnant and have received a COVID-19 vaccine, you can enroll in v-safe. V-safe is CDC's smartphone-based tool that uses text messaging and web surveys to provide personalized health check-ins after vaccination. A v-safe pregnancy registry has been established to gather information on the health of pregnant people who have received a COVID-19 vaccine. If people enrolled in v-safe report that they were pregnant at the time of vaccination or after vaccination, the registry staff might contact them to learn more. Participation is voluntary, and participants may opt-out at any time.

9. Who should get tested for COVID-19?

The following people should get tested for COVID-19:

- People who have symptoms of COVID-19.
- Most people who have had close contact (within 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period) with someone with confirmed COVID-19.
- Fully vaccinated people should be tested 3-5 days following a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result.
- People who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 3 months and recovered do not need to get tested following an exposure as long as they do not develop new symptoms.
- Unvaccinated people who have taken part in activities that put them at higher risk for COVID-19 because they cannot physically distance as needed to avoid exposure, such as travel, attending large social or mass gatherings, or being in crowded or poorly-ventilated indoor settings.
- People who have been asked or referred to get tested by their healthcare provider, or state, tribal, or territorial health department.

CDC recommends that anyone with any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 get tested, regardless of vaccination status or prior infection. If you get tested because you have symptoms or were potentially exposed to the virus, you should stay away from others pending test results and follow the advice of your health care provider or a public health professional.

10. How is COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 spreads when an infected person breathes out droplets and very small particles that contain the virus. These droplets and particles can be breathed in by other people or land on their eyes, noses, or mouth. In some circumstances, they may contaminate surfaces they touch. People who are closer than 6 feet from the infected person are most likely to get infected.

Types of Spread

COVID-19 is spread in three main ways

- Breathing in the air when close to an infected person who is exhaling small droplets and particles that contain the virus.
- Having these small droplets and particles that contain viruses land on the eyes, nose, or mouth, especially through splashes and sprays like a cough or sneeze.
- Touching eyes, nose, or mouth with hands that have the virus on them.

11. What can I do to slow the spread of COVID-19?

- Get a COVID-19 vaccine.
- Wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth to help protect yourself and others.
- Stay at least 6 feet apart from others who don't live with you.
- Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water aren't available.

Additional Resources

See how your community is moving around differently due to COVID-19

Vaccines for COVID-19

About Your COVID-19 Vaccine

When You've Been Fully Vaccinated

How Do I Find a COVID-19 Vaccine

Benefits of Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine

Safety of COVID-19 Vaccines

COVID Data Tracker