



Updated 4/30/21: This update provides information on the three COVID-19 vaccines that are now authorized in the US. These vaccines are made by Moderna, Pfizer, and Janssen/Johnson & Johnson (J&J).

### Why is vaccination important?

Vaccination is a safe and effective way to prevent disease. Vaccines save millions of lives each year. When we get vaccinated, we aren't just protecting ourselves, but also those around us. You can help stop the pandemic by getting a COVID-19 vaccine when one is available to you.

### How well do the vaccines work?

In the vaccine studies, all 3 vaccines were very effective at preventing severe illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths from COVID-19. You can't directly compare the results of the trials for the J&J/Janssen and the mRNA vaccines because:

- The studies were done at different times and in different locations - so the level of infection in the communities and the type and number of viral variants varied.
- The studies used different groups of people who had different rates of underlying illness.
- The studies used different definitions of cases, side effects, and serious events.

Because all three vaccines performed equally well at preventing serious illness, hospitalizations, and deaths, the best vaccine to get is the one that is being offered to you.

## GETTING THE VACCINE

### Will I have to pay to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

No. If you have insurance, your doctor or pharmacy may charge your insurance company a fee for giving the vaccine. People without health insurance can get COVID-19 vaccines at no cost. There are no out-of-pocket payments for anyone.

### Will I be asked about my immigration status when I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

No. COVID-19 vaccine is being given to Los Angeles County residents at no cost regardless of immigration status. You should not be asked about your immigration status when you get a COVID vaccine. Your medical information is private and getting a COVID-19 vaccine does not affect your immigration status. You do not need a government-issued ID or a letter from your employer to get a vaccine. For questions about immigration, visit the Office of Immigrant Affairs webpage [oia.lacounty.gov](http://oia.lacounty.gov) or call 800-593-8222.

### Where is vaccine being given?

Public Health and county, city, community, and healthcare partners are working together to vaccinate people in eligible groups at many different locations. Vaccines are available at over 600 vaccination sites throughout LA County.

These include:

- Large vaccination sites called PODs (Point of Dispensing sites) or hubs
- Health clinics and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs)
- Pharmacies
- Some workplaces, including hospitals
- Some senior housing developments and senior centers





- Mobile vaccination units
- Skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) and long-term care facilities with congregate living, such as assisted living
- Special community vaccination sites run by Public Health and county, city, community, and healthcare partners

### How can I get vaccinated?

Visit [VaccinateLACounty.com](https://www.vaccinatelacounty.com), click on “How to Get Vaccinated” and follow the steps on the webpage. You can make an appointment and also see locations where you can get vaccinated without an appointment.

You can also call the **DPH Vaccine Call Center**:

- If you don’t have a computer or need help making an appointment
- If you need transportation to a vaccination site
- If you are homebound

The number is **833-540-0473** 7 days a week from 8am to 8:30pm

Information also available in multiple languages 24/7 by calling 2-1-1

You can also check with your usual healthcare provider as you may be able to be vaccinated at one of their facilities. A list of facilities and providers offering vaccine is available on [VaccinateLACounty.com](https://www.vaccinatelacounty.com) or by clicking [here](#).

### I just moved to LA County and my 2nd dose of vaccine is due. Where can I get my 2nd dose?

Visit the appointment webpage (see instructions above) and look for a location that offers the same type of vaccine that you got for your first dose. The type of vaccine is shown next to the name of the location on the webpage and/or in the appointment booking system. Be sure to bring your CDC vaccination card and Photo ID to your 2nd dose appointment.

### How many doses of COVID-19 vaccine will I need?

- For the J&J/Janssen vaccine, you just need a single dose.
- The Pfizer vaccine is given as 2 doses 21 days apart.
- The Moderna vaccine needs 2 doses given 28 days apart.
- If you are late getting the second dose of a 2-dose series, you do not need to start over. It is important to get the same kind of vaccine for both doses.

With all 3 vaccines, you are not considered to be [fully vaccinated](#) until 2 weeks after your last vaccine.

### When am I considered to be fully vaccinated?

People are considered [fully vaccinated](#):

- 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series (the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines), or
- 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine (the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine)

If it has been less than 2 weeks since your shot, or if you still need to get your second dose, you are NOT fully protected. Keep taking all [prevention steps](#) until you are fully vaccinated.

We don’t know how long the protection from the vaccine will last yet. This means we don’t know if you will need to get a booster dose in the future.





### Can I get sick leave when I go to get my vaccine or if I am unable to work afterwards?

Covered Employees in the public or private sectors who work for employers with more than 25 employees are entitled to up to 80 hours of COVID-19 related sick leave from January 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021. This includes attending a vaccine appointment or being unable to work or telework due to vaccine-related symptoms. For more information, see the 2021 COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave [FAQs](#) and [poster](#).

## VACCINATION RECORDS

### What is the white vaccine record?

The CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card (white card) is the official proof of vaccination. Everyone should be given one when they are vaccinated. **Please keep it safe as it cannot be replaced.** Consider taking a photo or making a photocopy of it.

### What can I do if I lose my white card?

If you did not get a white card, or you lost it, there are 2 ways to get a copy of your official record from the state's California Immunization Registry (CAIR).

- Ask your primary care provider to look up your vaccination record in the California state immunization registry (CAIR) and give you a copy.
- Request a copy of your vaccination record directly from the state immunization registry, CAIR. Please wait at least 2-3 weeks after you are vaccinated before making the request and know that this request may take an additional 2-3 weeks given the high demand. Complete the online [Authorization To Release Form](#). Have a scan or photo of a current official picture ID ready to upload as the form must be completed in a single session. You will receive a record by email. The record can only be requested online and can only be provided by email. For more information, visit [cairweb.org](http://cairweb.org).

### Can I get a digital vaccination record?

- The CDC white card or CAIR record is your official proof of your COVID vaccination. You may receive a digital record in addition to your white card as a convenience, but it may not be accepted at all places/companies as the official proof of vaccination.
- Several different kinds of digital reminders and records are being used in LA County. The type depends on the record keeping system used by the provider who administered the vaccine. Most systems require the person being vaccinated to give an email address and/or cell phone number when they make an appointment or get vaccinated. Ask your provider when you get your vaccine about a digital record.
- The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) has partnered with [Healthvana](#) to provide a digital copy of the vaccination record. This is available to people who are vaccinated at locations in Los Angeles County that are run by DPH, the City of Los Angeles, select community clinics (that are not part of a hospital system), and pharmacies. For more information on Healthvana and electronic records, see the DPH "[After you get a vaccine](#)" webpage.



## ABOUT THE VACCINE

### How many COVID-19 vaccines are there?

Around the world over 50 COVID-19 vaccines are being tested in humans. Three vaccines are allowed in the United States so far. They are made by Pfizer, Moderna, and Janssen, a company owned by Johnson & Johnson.

### How do vaccines work?

Vaccines work by preparing your body's natural defenses to recognize and fight off germs.

- Some vaccines contain dead or weakened versions of the germ.
- Others contain substances made to look like part of the germ.
- The COVID-19 vaccines teach the body to make proteins that look like part of the germ. (See the question "How do the COVID-19 vaccines work?" for more information).

When you get a vaccine, your immune system responds.

It:

- Makes antibodies. These are proteins produced naturally by the immune system to fight disease.
- Prepares your immune cells to respond to future infection.
- Remembers the disease and how to fight it. If you are exposed to the germ after getting the vaccine, your immune system can quickly destroy it before you become sick.

This is what makes vaccines so effective. Instead of treating a disease after it happens, vaccines can prevent us from getting sick in the first place.

### How do the COVID-19 vaccines work?

None of the COVID-19 vaccines contain the virus that causes COVID-19 in any form. All 3 COVID-19 vaccines work by teaching our cells how to make harmless spike proteins (the crown-like spikes on the surface of the COVID-19 virus). Making the spike protein does not harm our cells.

- When we are vaccinated, the spike proteins show on the surfaces of our cells. Our immune system sees them and knows that they don't belong there.
- Our bodies react by building an immune response. It makes antibodies that can act against the COVID-19 virus's spike protein and it prepares immune cells. This will protect us if we are exposed to the virus in the future.

The COVID-19 vaccines differ in how they teach our cells to make the spike protein

- The vaccines made by Pfizer and Moderna are called mRNA vaccines. Messenger RNA (mRNA) is genetic material that tells our bodies how to make proteins. The mRNA in the vaccine is wrapped in oily bubbles (known as lipid nanoparticles or LNPs). When the mRNA enters our cells, it teaches them how to make copies of the spike protein.
- The vaccine made by J&J/Janssen is called a viral vector vaccine. It is made of genetic instructions (DNA) inside a 'viral vector' that is used to carry the DNA into our cells. (The viral vector is a harmless version of a common cold virus). Our cells read the genetic material and make mRNA, and this mRNA teaches our cells to make the spike protein.

You can learn more on the [Understanding How COVID-19 Vaccines Work](#) CDC website.



### What is in the vaccines?

For a full list of ingredients, please see each vaccine's Fact Sheet for Recipients and Caregivers: [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#), [Moderna COVID-19 vaccine](#), and [J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine](#). None of the vaccines contain eggs, gelatin, latex, or preservatives.

### Do the COVID-19 vaccines contain aborted fetal cells?

No, none of COVID-19 vaccines authorized for use in the United States contain any fetal tissue or fetal cells.

- **Pfizer and Moderna** did not use any fetal cell lines to develop or produce their COVID-19 vaccines. But they did use a fetal cell line for laboratory testing before their vaccines were tested on people.
- **Johnson & Johnson** used a fetal cell line to develop and test their COVID-19 vaccine. They also use it for production. The COVID-19 vaccines themselves do not contain any fetal cells.

The cell lines were made in laboratories from cells from 2 abortions conducted in 1973 and 1985. None of the fetal cells used came from a recent abortion or from an abortion done for the sole purpose of vaccine development or other research.

The Catholic Church has reviewed the use of fetal cells for this purpose and gone on to state that “it is morally acceptable to receive COVID-19 vaccines that have used cell lines from aborted fetuses in their research and production process.” If this issue is of concern to you, we encourage you to review the document [COVID-19 Vaccine and Fetal Cell Lines](#) carefully so you can make an informed decision about getting vaccinated.

## SAFETY AND SIDE-EFFECTS

### Can you get COVID-19 from a vaccine?

No. The vaccines cannot give you COVID-19. But you could have been infected before you got the vaccine and then started showing symptoms afterwards. It can take up to 14 days for symptoms to appear after you have been infected. It is also possible to get infected after you get vaccinated, because it takes time for your body to build immunity and, even though the vaccines are very effective, none are 100%.

None of the COVID-19 vaccines have the virus that causes COVID-19 in them. The viral vector in the J&J/Janssen vaccine is a harmless version of a common cold virus. It can't replicate inside our cells or cause illness and it cannot change our DNA in any way.

Sometimes people get a fever or feel tired for a day or so after getting a vaccine. These vaccine side-effects are normal and are a sign that the body is building immunity.

### What are common side effects of the COVID-19 vaccines?

You may get side effects, like the ones after the flu vaccine or shingles vaccine after getting a COVID-19 vaccine. For two-dose vaccines, side effects are more common after the second dose. These side effects may affect your ability to do daily activities, but they should go away within a day or two. Not everyone gets side effects. They may include:

- Fever, chills, and muscle aches



- Headache
- Feeling tired
- Sore or red arm

Side effects are normal and a sign that the vaccine is working. It shows your body is learning to fight a germ and build up immunity. Not everyone gets side-effects. It is important to get the second dose even if you get side effects after the first dose unless a vaccination provider or your doctor tells you not to.

**Contact your doctor if you have:**

- Vaccine side-effects that last more than 2 days,
- Symptoms that start more than 2 days after you get the vaccine
- Any of these symptoms: cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell (as these are not vaccine side-effects)
- Symptoms that get worse or worry you.

**Are there any serious side effects?**

As with any medicine, it is possible to have a serious allergic reaction, such as not being able to breathe. This reaction is very rare but if it does happen, it is usually within in first 15-30 minutes after vaccination. Everyone is observed after getting a COVID-19 vaccine so that healthcare providers can treat an allergic reaction straight away.

There is a risk of a rare but serious condition involving blood clots and low platelets in people after receiving the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 Vaccine. This risk is very low. This problem is rare and happened in about 7 per 1 million vaccinated women between 18 and 49 years old. For women 50 years and older and men of any age, this problem is even more rare. This problem has not been linked to the other two COVID-19 vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna).

For 3 weeks after receiving the vaccine, be on the lookout for possible symptoms. These include:

- Severe or persistent headaches
- Blurred vision
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Leg swelling
- Persistent abdominal pain
- Easy bruising or tiny blood spots under the skin beyond the site of the injection.

**Are the COVID-19 vaccines likely to have any long term side effects?**

Long term side effects following any vaccination are extremely rare. Vaccine monitoring has historically shown that if side effects are going to happen, they generally happen within six weeks of receiving a vaccine dose. For this reason, the Food and Drug Administration required each of the authorized COVID-19 vaccines to be studied for at least two months (eight weeks) after the final dose. CDC continues to closely monitor COVID-19 vaccines. If scientists find a connection between a safety issue and a vaccine, FDA and the vaccine manufacturer will work toward an appropriate solution to address the specific safety concern (for example, a problem with a specific lot, a manufacturing issue, or the vaccine itself). This is what is happened after safety monitoring detected an unusual type of blood clot with low platelets in women who received the J&J vaccine (see above).



### **If I get an adverse reaction (possible side effect) after I am vaccinated, how should I report it?**

If you have an adverse event (possible side effect) after you are vaccinated, even if you aren't sure that the vaccine caused it, please report it to VAERS. The Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System is an early warning system that the FDA and CDC use to detect possible safety problems. To make a report, call 1-800-822-7967 or visit <https://vaers.hhs.gov/reportevent.html>.

If you have signed up for [V-Safe](#), CDC's after vaccination health checker, you can also report your symptoms through the smart phone app.

Neither VAERS nor V-safe provide medical advice. If you have symptoms or health problems that concern you at any time following COVID-19 vaccination, please contact your healthcare provider or seek medical treatment.

### **Will getting the vaccine cause me to test positive on a COVID-19 test?**

No. Vaccines won't cause you to test positive on a PCR or antigen viral test (like the swab test) that looks for current COVID-19 infection. You may test positive on some antibody (blood) tests. This is because one of the ways that vaccines work is to teach your body to make antibodies.

See the public health testing webpage [ph.lacounty.gov/covidtests](http://ph.lacounty.gov/covidtests) to learn more about COVID-19 tests.

## **WHO CAN GET THE VACCINE?**

### **If I have already had COVID-19, do I still need to get vaccinated?**

Yes. You do need the vaccine even if you have had COVID-19. We don't yet know how long you are protected after you have had COVID-19, so it is important to have the vaccine to strengthen your immunity. It is safe to get the vaccine after getting COVID-19 but you should wait until after your isolation period is over. This is so that you don't infect healthcare workers and others when you go to get vaccinated. If you have had monoclonal antibody or convalescent treatment, you should wait for 90 days before getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

### **Can children get the COVID-19 vaccine?**

No. People under the age of 16 cannot get COVID-19 vaccine at this time. There isn't enough information available yet about the use of these vaccines in children. People age 16 and 17 can get the Pfizer vaccine. The Moderna and J&J/Janssen vaccines are for people 18 and older.

### **Can people with weak immune systems get a COVID-19 vaccine?**

Yes. People with weak immune systems may be at higher risk of getting COVID-19 and more likely to become very sick. They can get any of the 3 vaccines but are advised to talk to their doctor about the best time to be vaccinated. The vaccine studies included some people with weak immune systems, such as cancer and stable HIV and their side effects were not different. But we don't know how well the vaccines will work for people with weak immune systems compared to people with normal immune systems.





### Can people with allergies get a COVID-19 vaccine?

It depends.

- People who are allergic to things like oral medication, food, pets, or pollen, or people who have a family history of allergies, can be vaccinated.
  - But people who have had an allergic reaction to a vaccine, injectable therapy, polyethylene glycol (PEG), or polysorbate should talk to their doctor to decide if it is safe for them to get vaccinated.
  - There is a small risk of severe allergic reaction with any vaccine.
  - Everyone is observed for allergic reactions after getting a COVID-19 vaccine.
- Information about allergic reactions may change. Be sure to check the latest guidance on the CDC [COVID-19 Vaccines and Allergic Reactions](#) webpage and talk to your doctor.

### Can pregnant women get the vaccine?

Yes. Pregnant women can choose to receive any of the 3 vaccines, but it is a personal decision, and they may want to talk it through with their doctor.

- Pregnant women who get COVID-19 are more likely to get severely ill than women who are not pregnant. They may also be more likely to get pregnancy complications like preterm birth compared to pregnant women without COVID-19.
- There is limited information about the safety of COVID-19 vaccines during pregnancy as pregnant women were not included in the vaccine studies. However, based on what we know about how these vaccines work, experts do not believe they pose a risk.
  - Pregnant women were not enrolled in the studies, but animal studies did not show any safety concerns.
  - The same vector in the J&J/Janssen vaccine was used in pregnant women in other trials and found to be safe for both mother and infant.
  - Many pregnant women who have received the vaccine are being monitored and so far, no safety concerns have been identified.

### Can women who are breastfeeding get the vaccine?

Yes. Lactating women were not included in the vaccine studies so there are no data on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in these women or the effects of the vaccines on the breastfed infant or milk production. However, based on what we know about how these vaccines work, they are not thought to be a risk for the mother or baby. Women who are breastfeeding may choose to be vaccinated.

## PROTECTING MYSELF AND OTHERS

### What if I get symptoms of COVID-19 after I have been vaccinated?

You should get tested and stay home and away from others if you have:

- Vaccine side-effects that last more than 2 days
- Symptoms that start more than 2 days after you get the vaccine
- Cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell – these symptoms are NOT side effects of the vaccine

It is still important to watch out for symptoms of COVID-19 even if you have been vaccinated, especially if







you've been around someone who is sick.

### **Why do we need a vaccine if we can do other things, like social distance and wear masks?**

We need to do as much as we can to stop the pandemic. Vaccines boost your immune system so it will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. Other steps, like masks and social distancing, help lower your chance of being exposed to or spreading the virus. Together, these tools offer the best protection.

### **What can I do now to help protect myself from getting COVID-19 until it is my turn to get a vaccine?**

To protect yourself and others, follow these recommendations:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a mask when you are around others.
- Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated spaces (outside or well-ventilated spaces are safer).
- Stay at least 6 feet away from others.
- Wash your hands often.

See guidance for [reducing your risk](#). You should do this even after you are fully vaccinated.

### **Can I stop wearing a mask once I am vaccinated?**

For more information see the document '[if i am fully vaccinated, when can i go without a mask?](#)'

### **If I am vaccinated and am exposed to someone who has COVID-19, do I need to quarantine?**

If you do not have symptoms and you are [fully vaccinated](#) you do not need to quarantine or get tested (unless you live in a group setting like a correctional or detention facility or group home). But you must monitor your health for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days and continue to protect yourself and others.