



COVID-19 Vaccines - Frequently Asked Questions

VACCINE BASICS



Why is it important to get vaccinated?

COVID-19 vaccines protect people from getting very sick from COVID-19 and ending up in the hospital or dying. They also reduce the risk of becoming chronically ill from COVID-19 (such as long COVID), and from missing work and school.

In addition, getting vaccinated lowers the risk of giving COVID-19 to other people. This is especially helpful in protecting people at [higher risk of getting very sick](#).

It is recommended that people who've had COVID-19 in the past still get the vaccine to strengthen their immunity and to reduce their risk of getting hospitalized with COVID-19.

How well do the vaccines work?

The COVID-19 vaccines work very well at protecting against severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19. Compared to people who are [up to date](#) with their COVID-19 vaccinations, unvaccinated people are [more likely to get COVID-19](#), much more likely to be [hospitalized with COVID-19](#), and much more likely to [die from COVID-19](#).

Experts are seeing that the protection can weaken over time, especially for certain groups, such as people ages 65 years and older and people with weak immune systems. This is why staying up to date with all recommended doses, including booster doses is important. The updated (bivalent) boosters help restore protection that has decreased over time. See [Booster Doses](#) for more information.

As the science and the virus evolves, so do vaccine recommendations. Scientists and medical experts continue to closely watch for signs of decreased immunity in people of different ages and with different risk factors. They also look at how well the vaccines protect against new variants of the virus.

Which vaccines are available in the US?

Four COVID-19 vaccines are approved or authorized in the US to prevent COVID-19. They are made by Pfizer-BioNTech (brand name Comirnaty), Moderna (brand name Spikevax), Novavax, and Johnson & Johnson. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are authorized for people age 6 months and older. The Novavax vaccines are authorized for people ages of 12 years and older. The Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccines are authorized for adults ages 18 and over.

The CDC recommends the Pfizer, Moderna, and Novavax COVID-19 vaccines over the J&J vaccine. The J&J vaccine can be [considered in some situations](#).

To learn more, visit the CDC [Stay Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines Including Boosters](#) webpage.

What is the difference between the original (monovalent) COVID-19 vaccines and the updated (bivalent) vaccines?

Monovalent vaccines target the original virus that causes COVID-19. The vaccines were updated to make bivalent vaccines that target both the original COVID-19 virus and the BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron variants.





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- *Primary series doses* - Monovalent vaccines are used as the primary series for all vaccines with one exception. A bivalent vaccine is used for dose 3 of a primary series of Pfizer vaccine for children ages 6 months–4 years.
- *Booster doses* - All Pfizer and Moderna booster doses are bivalent (updated) vaccines. The Novavax booster dose is a monovalent vaccine.

Where can I get more information?



- To print or view this FAQ or FAQs on other COVID-19 vaccine topics, scan the QR code or visit [COVID-19 vaccine FAQs](#).
- [VaccinateLACounty.com](#) – including [COVID-19 Vaccine Schedules](#) with graphics to show when each dose is due and information on [How to Get Vaccinated](#).
- [Vaccines for COVID-19](#) CDC webpage.
- Ask your doctor if you have questions.

