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# About the COVID-19 Vaccines

## What You Can Do as a Rural Leader in Your Community to Share Information About the COVID-19 Vaccines

A trusted community member can effectively deliver messages that motivate people to get a COVID-19 vaccine and engage in other positive health behaviors.

Rural communities are diverse, so you'll need to customize your messaging about the COVID-19 vaccines to account for the local culture of your community.

- Pair the general COVID-19 vaccine information below (Key Things to Know About COVID-19 Vaccines) with customized COVID-19 vaccination information for your community. Customized messaging creates trust and acceptance of the general information.
- Ensure local doctors and other providers know they can call CDC's Clinician On-Call Center, a 24-hour hotline for answering COVID-19 questions. Dial 1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) and ask for the Clinician On-Call Center.
- Use free materials from [CDC's toolkits \(available in English and Spanish\)](#) to share key facts about the vaccines in newsletters, presentations, or to share or post in community settings.
- Check out the [Rural Health Information Hub](#) for innovative ideas for education and outreach.
- When you come across COVID-19 information, cross-check it with [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus) and learn how to respond to misinformation that you encounter.

## Key Things to Share About COVID-19 Vaccines

### The benefits of getting a COVID-19 vaccine

COVID-19 can have [serious, life-threatening complications](#), and there's no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you or your loved ones. And if you get sick, you could spread the disease to friends, family, and others in your community.

COVID-19 vaccination is an important tool to help stop the pandemic. All COVID-19 vaccines that are currently available in the United States prevent nearly 100% of hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19. You should get a vaccine as soon as you can.

### The different available vaccines

[Multiple COVID-19 vaccines are currently available](#) in the United States. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized the vaccines only after confirming that they were proven safe and effective in medical studies involving tens of thousands of volunteers like you.

Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine only requires one shot. The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines require two shots to get the most protection.

### The cost of the vaccines

The federal government is providing the vaccines free of charge to everyone in the United States. It's free to everyone even if you don't have health insurance. And it's free regardless of immigration status.

### Safety of the vaccines

Every COVID-19 vaccine authorized for use in the United States is [safe](#). Tens of millions of people nationwide have safely received a COVID-19 vaccine, and these vaccines continue to undergo extensive safety monitoring.

**For people who are pregnant, nursing, or would like to have a baby.** People who are pregnant are at increased risk for a bad case of COVID-19. That's why CDC says that if you're pregnant, you may choose to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines are unsafe for people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or would like to become pregnant someday.

**For people who've already had COVID-19.** Experts don't yet know how long you're protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. It's possible—although rare—that you could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 again. Getting vaccinated is a safer way to build protection than getting infected.

**Effectiveness of the vaccines on new forms of the virus.** New forms, or variants, of the virus that causes COVID-

## SAFETY IS THE TOP PRIORITY

The FDA and CDC have the highest standards when it comes to ensuring the safety and effectiveness of vaccines. Their process includes the following procedures:

- ✓ Scientists must first test vaccines extensively in medical studies to ensure they are safe and effective.
- ✓ Before the FDA authorizes a vaccine for use among the public, it ensures its safety by independently:
  - Reviewing the data from the medical studies, and
  - Inspecting the manufacturing facilities.
- ✓ Even after a vaccine has been authorized, the FDA and CDC closely monitor vaccine administration to identify even rare side effects or reactions.
- ✓ The FDA and CDC closely review any reports of side effects or reactions and share these facts with the public.

The extremely rare cases of blood clotting following Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine—just a small number of cases out of millions of vaccinations—show that the FDA and CDC's vaccine safety monitoring systems work and catch even the rarest of reactions.

A thorough investigation has confirmed that Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine is safe and effective.

And doctors have been notified and trained to understand the signs to watch for and the proper course of treatment if blood clots occur.



19 have emerged. Current data suggest that the COVID-19 vaccines used in the United States should work against these variants.

## Side effects from the vaccines

People who've been vaccinated commonly report [side effects](#)—these are normal signs that your body is building protection against the virus that causes COVID-19.

These side effects are mild and typically short-lived, lasting at most a few days. The most common side effect is a sore arm at the injection site. Other side effects include fever, chills, feeling tired, headache, muscle pain, and joint pain.

A small number of people reported a severe allergic reaction called anaphylaxis after vaccination. This is extremely rare (two to five people for every million people vaccinated), and vaccine providers know how to effectively treat this type of reaction.

Even with side effects, the COVID-19 vaccines pose much smaller risks to your health than the virus.

## Vaccine safety reporting systems

The FDA and CDC are using both established and new safety monitoring systems to closely monitor the COVID-19 vaccines and make sure they're safe.

If you experience a reaction to one of the COVID-19 vaccines, report it to the [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System](#). You can also report your reaction through [v-safe](#), a smartphone tool that allows you to quickly tell CDC if you have any side effects after getting a vaccine.

## Availability of the vaccines

Vaccines are here now and everyone age 12 and older in the United States can get them. You have three ways to find vaccines near you:

- Go to [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov)
- Text your ZIP code to 438829
- Call 1-800-232-0233

## Vaccination is one of several tools for ending the pandemic

Until you're fully vaccinated (2 weeks after your final dose), you should keep using all the tools available to protect yourself and others:

- Wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth when you're inside public places.
- Stay 6 feet (2 arm lengths) apart from people who don't live with you and who may not be vaccinated.
- Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water aren't available.

These preventive measures are important because scientists are still learning how well and for how long the vaccines prevent you from spreading the virus that causes COVID-19.

## Vaccine Information in Your Community

Check out your [state and local health department websites](#) for the latest information about vaccination and the COVID-19 cases in your area and share this information with the community you serve.

### VACCINE DEVELOPMENT IN FOCUS

Normally, vaccine development takes so long because of limited resources and funding.

Because of the urgency of the COVID-19 pandemic, scientists received a lot of money to fund their research into developing and testing vaccines.

Manufacturers also received a lot of money to start producing vaccines in large quantities while scientists tested their safety and effectiveness in tens of thousands of volunteers.

No one cut any corners or skipped any steps in the COVID-19 vaccine development, testing, and authorization process. They simply overlapped some of the steps instead of doing them one after the other. All the while, the FDA, CDC, and independent medical experts have been monitoring the safety of the vaccines and continue to do so.

Also, the scientists who worked on the vaccines didn't start from scratch. Scientists have been studying vaccines for over 100 years. The technology used for the mRNA vaccines had been studied for two decades. And the National Institutes of Health had already been working on a prototype coronavirus vaccine.

