

UNDERSTANDING THE COVID-19 VACCINE



The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted long-standing gaps in our healthcare system, including the dangers of misinformation. The rollout of the COVID-19 vaccines represents a new challenge to advancing public health. It is important to have accurate information on the COVID-19 vaccines so that you can make informed decisions for yourself and your family.

HOW DOES THE COVID-19 VACCINE WORK?

Currently, the Food and Drug Administration has approved two vaccines for Americans: the Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine and the Moderna Vaccine. Both vaccines are [mRNA vaccines](#) and help our bodies develop immunity to COVID-19. The vaccine contains material from the virus that causes COVID-19. This gives our cells instructions on how to make a harmless protein. The protein allows our cells to recognize and destroy the virus' genetic material in the future. This trains our immune system on how to combat COVID-19 without getting you sick. Neither of the COVID-19 vaccines use the live virus that causes COVID-19. The vaccine does not alter your DNA.

HOW IS THE VACCINE ADMINISTERED?

Both vaccines are given through an intramuscular injection in the deltoid muscle. Both vaccines require [one initial shot and a second follow up shot](#) 21-28 days later.

ARE THERE AGE RESTRICTIONS FOR THE VACCINE?

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has been approved for [individuals ages 16 years and older](#). The Moderna vaccine has been approved for [individuals ages 18 years and older](#). Both companies are doing pediatric testing now to determine whether the vaccine is safe for children.

HOW CAN THE COVID-19 VACCINE BE SAFE IF IT WAS RAPIDLY DEVELOPED AND TESTED?

The emergency situation warranted an emergency response. Many [pharmaceutical companies along with the federal government invested significant resources](#) into developing the vaccines. Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna performed adequate testing and did not bypass safety protocols.

IS IT TRUE THAT THE VACCINE CONTAINS A MICROCHIP OR TRACKING TECHNOLOGY?

No, that is a [myth](#). There is no vaccine microchip and neither vaccine contains any electronic technology.

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HOW WILL THE VACCINE AFFECT COMMUNITIES OF COLOR?

We are conscious of the painful history of medical racism and abuse against Americans who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. As a result of this history, we understand the concern communities of color have about the COVID-19 vaccine. Unfortunately, communities of color face higher rates of COVID-19 infections. The Center for Disease Control reported that [Native Americans were 3.5 times more likely to contract COVID-19](#) when compared to white Americans. [African Americans have been infected with COVID-19 at nearly three times](#) the rate of white Americans, according to the National Urban League. It is important that communities of color are involved in every step of the vaccine process. Both vaccines were tested on a large sample of diverse populations:

- [Pfizer-BioNTech tested 43,931 people](#): 13% Hispanic, 10% African American, 6% Asian, 45% between 56-85.
- [Moderna tested 30,000 people](#): 20% Hispanic, 10% African American/Black, 4% Asian, 29% over the age of 65.

DOES THE VACCINE CAUSE AUTISM OR OTHER MENTAL DISABILITIES?

While we do not know the long-term impact of the COVID-19 vaccines, [there has been no link between the ingredients and autism](#). The myth that vaccines of any sort can cause autism has no scientific backing and has been disproven by several studies. Additionally, this myth serves to dehumanize autistic people and presents differences in neurology as inherently bad.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF GETTING THE VACCINE AND IS IT WORSE THAN COVID-19 ITSELF?

Those who have received the vaccine have reported [short-term mild or moderate reactions that are resolved without complication or injury](#). Reports after the vaccine showed that 15% of people developed short-lived symptoms at the site of injection. Around 50% developed symptoms such as headaches, chills, fatigue, muscle pain, or fever that lasted for a few days. While side effects can be an indicator that your immune system is properly responding to the vaccine, you should still be mindful of long-term side effects.

WHY SHOULD I CONSIDER GETTING THE COVID-19 VACCINE?

Receiving the vaccine, like wearing a mask or keeping six feet social distancing, helps prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Slowing the spread of the virus has long-term benefits for you, your family, and your community. To learn more about COVID-19 vaccination, please visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19.

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