

COVID-19 Vaccines:

Learn the Facts to Stay Safe and Protect Others



Introduction

This booklet will help you learn more about the COVID-19 vaccines. The vaccines can protect you and those you care about from COVID-19.

This booklet was written with input from:

- Community members
- Public health experts
- Doctors
- Pharmacists

If you are getting this booklet at a community learning session, please remember:

- Your group leader may be a volunteer who is not a health expert. If you have questions they cannot answer, talk with your doctor or pharmacist. With their help, you can make the best decisions for your health.
- This booklet is interactive! During your session, follow your group leader's guidance. You will see this symbol in the booklet when it is time for you to write something down:

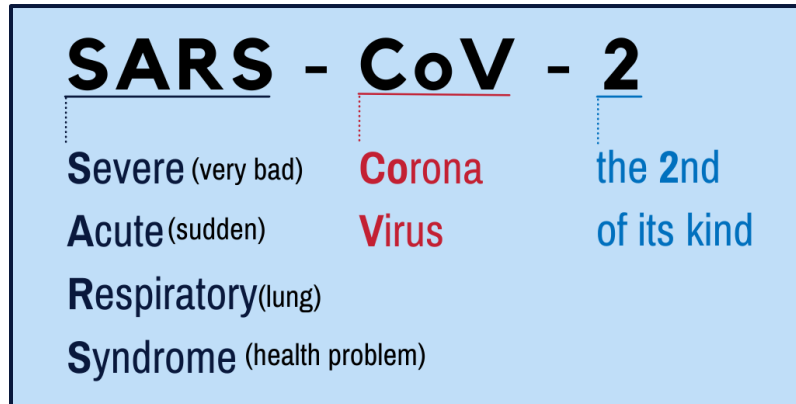
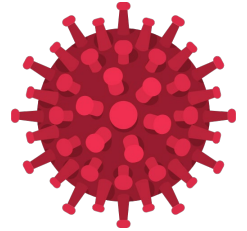


Scientists are still studying ways to prevent and treat COVID-19. Check in with your doctor, pharmacist, or your Arkansas Department of Health local health unit often to learn the latest facts.

About COVID-19

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an illness caused by a coronavirus. There are many types of coronaviruses. They are called this because it looks like they have a crown. “Corona” means crown. Some of them cause a mild cold. While others, like COVID-19, cause severe symptoms and even death. The virus is called SARS-CoV-2. It stands for:



Over time, the COVID-19 virus has changed. New types of the virus, called “variants”, have started to spread. Examples of variants are Delta and Omicron.

How do I get COVID-19?

COVID-19 spreads through droplets when someone who has it breathes, coughs, or sneezes.

After that:

- Droplets can get in mouth, eyes, or nose.
- Droplets can land on surfaces you may touch. If you touch a surface that has COVID-19 on it then touch your eyes, mouth, or nose, you can get it.

People who have COVID-19 may not know they have it. They can spread it without knowing.

Who is at risk for getting COVID-19?

Everyone is at risk for getting COVID-19. This is because the virus passes easily from person to person. Even if you already had the virus, you could get it again.

You may be more likely to get COVID-19 if:



You are within 6 feet of others.



You do not wear a mask in public.



You do not wash your hands often.

About COVID-19

How serious is COVID-19?

If you get COVID-19, you could have no symptoms at all. Or, you could have mild symptoms such as those you have with a cold. But the virus can also cause **major damage** to your lungs. It could also cause **serious health problems** such as heart failure, kidney failure, blood clots, or stroke. If you have severe symptoms, you may need to stay in the hospital or need lifesaving measures. You could even **die** from COVID-19.

You do not know how COVID-19 will affect you.



Even if you get a mild case at first, we do not know how it could affect you later. **You could have chronic (long-lasting) side effects from COVID-19.** We are still learning what those side effects may be, but some include:

- Tiredness that does not go away
- Trouble thinking clearly, which may make it hard to work
- Shortness of breath
- Hair loss

Over time, the COVID-19 virus will change and cause new variants. **New variants may spread more easily and quickly and cause more severe symptoms.**

About COVID-19

Who is more at risk of getting more severe COVID-19?

Some groups of people have more risk of getting **severe** COVID-19. Use the sheet, “Learn the Risk of getting sick with COVID-19” to fill out the numbers below.



If you are a part of one of the groups below, check the box next to it.

People with certain health problems: We are still learning about this, but we know this includes people with:

- Cancer
- Diabetes (any type)
- Down syndrome
- Heart problems
- High blood pressure
- Kidney or liver problems
- Lung problems (like asthma and COPD)
- Obesity (very overweight)
- Sickle cell disease
- Weak immune system

Pregnant women

People who smoke

Adults 65 years and older:

- Only _____ **in 100 people** in the U.S. are adults 65 years and older.
- But, adults 65 years and older account for _____ **in 100 deaths** from COVID-19.

African Americans: _____ African Americans die from COVID-19 for every _____ White person.

Hispanics: _____ Hispanics die from COVID-19 for every _____ White person.

American Indians and Alaskan Natives: _____ American Indians and Alaskan Natives die from COVID-19 for every _____ White person.

About COVID-19

How else could COVID-19 impact my life and the lives of my loved ones?



If you get COVID-19, you could give it to others. Even if you do not get very sick, you could still give COVID-19 to someone else who may suffer more. In fact, you can pass COVID-19 to others even if you do not have any symptoms at all.



Who are the people you want to protect? List them in the space below.

My parents and other adults	My children or other children	My friends and family



You and others could have to miss work and lose pay. If you, or others you care about, get COVID-19 and have to miss work, it could impact your paychecks. You may not be able to work if:

- You have COVID-19 or got exposed to someone who has it.
- Your job must close because too many people are sick or have been exposed to COVID-19.
- Your child has to stay home from school or daycare, and you have to stay with them because:
 - They have COVID-19 or were exposed to someone who does.
 - School or daycare closes in-person care because too many people are sick or have been exposed.



It may be hard to get health care. You, or others you care about, may not be able to get the health care you need if the health care system is overwhelmed taking care of patients with COVID-19. For example:

- Let's say your family member is scheduled for a hip replacement. If the hospital has a lot of COVID-19 patients, they may have to cancel or reschedule their surgery. Waiting could mean more pain and more days of missing the things your family member enjoys.
- If you have a family member who has an emergency, such as a heart attack or stroke, they may not be able to get the care they need if emergency rooms are busy taking care of COVID-19 patients.

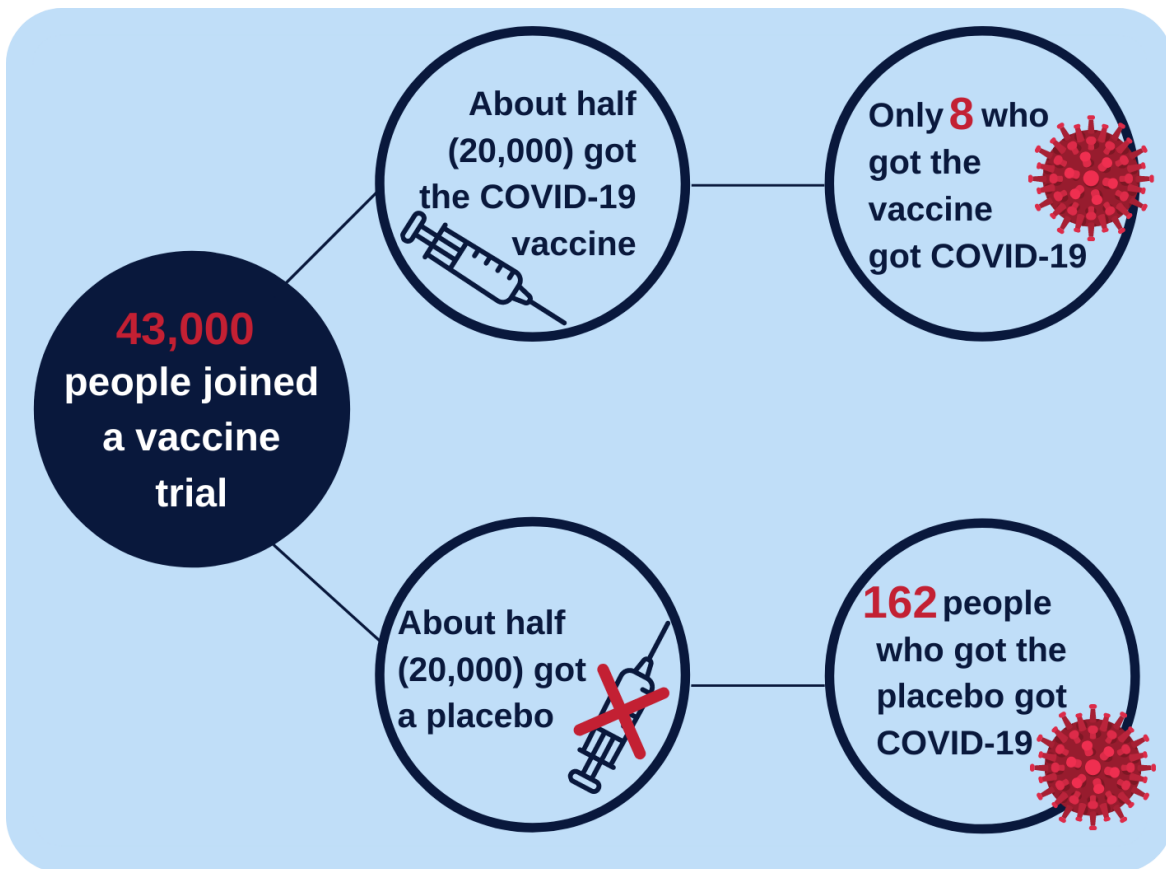
COVID-19 Vaccines Can Protect You from COVID-19

How do COVID-19 vaccines help protect me from the virus?

The COVID-19 vaccine will teach your immune system what the COVID-19 virus looks like. This allows your immune system to build a defense against it so you can fight the virus if you come in contact with it.

How do we know the vaccines help protect people from COVID-19?

Initial clinical trials show the vaccines work to protect people from getting COVID-19. In one of the trials, about 43,000 people joined. About half got the actual vaccine and about half got a placebo (a shot with no medicine in it). **The people who got the real vaccine were much less likely to get COVID-19.**



Researchers continue to study the vaccines and how well they protect us from new variants. These studies show that the vaccines are safe and they work.

COVID-19 Vaccines Can Protect You from COVID-19

Do the vaccines cause COVID-19?

No. The vaccines do not cause COVID-19. They do not have the COVID-19 virus in them, so they cannot give you COVID-19.

Can I still get COVID-19 if I get a vaccine?

Yes. But if you get the vaccine and booster doses, you are much less likely to have severe symptoms that may cause a hospital stay or death. Use the sheet, “Learn the Risk of getting sick with COVID-19” to fill out the information below.

- For every _____ who stayed in the hospital for COVID-19, _____ unvaccinated people stayed in the hospital for COVID-19.
- For every _____ who died from COVID-19, _____ unvaccinated people died from COVID-19.

Is it better to get a COVID-19 vaccine, or to get natural immunity from getting sick with COVID-19?

It is much safer to get the COVID-19 vaccine. If you get sick with COVID-19, you will develop some natural immunity. Natural immunity is the protection you get from a disease when you actually get sick. Doctors do not know how long natural immunity will last or how well it protects you. It can be different for each person. If you get COVID-19, you have some risks. If you get COVID-19, instead of the vaccine:

- You may have severe symptoms.
- You may have long-term health problems, even after you get better.
- You may have to go stay in the hospital to treat COVID-19.
- You could even die.

Are there risks to getting a COVID-19 vaccine?

Like other medicines, there are some risks if you get a COVID-19 vaccine. However, **long-term or severe effects are rare** for any vaccine. That includes the COVID-19 vaccine.

You are more likely to have long-lasting effects from getting COVID-19 than from a COVID-19 vaccine.

How COVID-19 Vaccines were Developed and Authorized for Use

Who approves vaccines before they are given to the public?

These federal agencies and groups of experts review data and approve new vaccines:

- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) protects public health by making sure that medical products are safe to use.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is the national public health agency for the U.S. They make the official recommendations to improve public health.
- The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) is a group of doctors and public health experts. They recommend to the CDC how to use vaccines to control disease in the U.S. Then the director of the CDC makes the final decision.

How are vaccines normally developed and how was the process different for COVID-19 vaccines?

Before a vaccine is ever given to people, it goes through a lot of testing to make sure it works and is safe. For COVID-19 vaccines, the usual steps were followed. **No steps were skipped.**

See the table on the next page to learn how the process was sped up for COVID-19 but still focused on safety.

How COVID-19 Vaccines were Developed and Authorized for Use

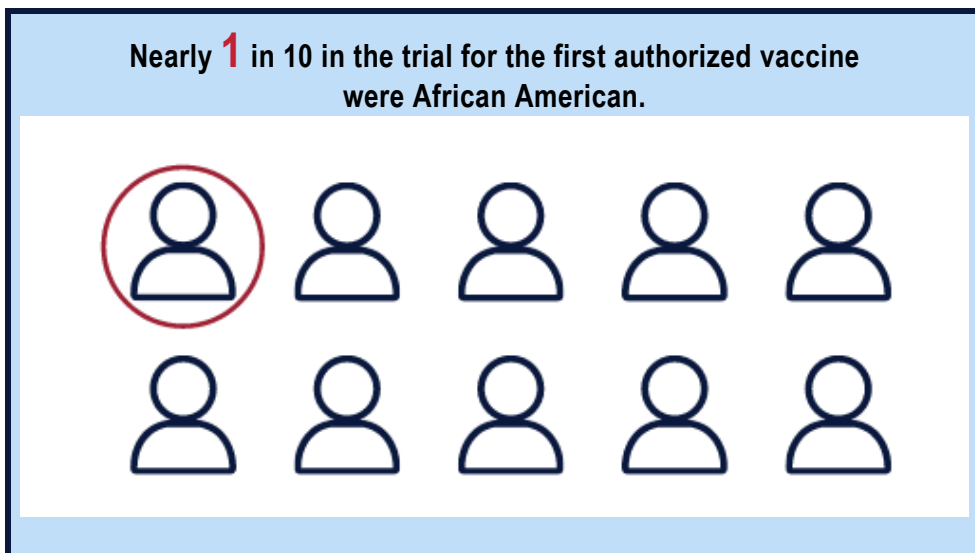
Steps	How are vaccines normally developed and authorized for use?	How is the process for COVID-19 vaccines different ?
Idea for a vaccine and lab testing	<p>Researchers get an idea for a vaccine to prevent or treat a disease. To see if it will work, they must do lots of tests. This costs a lot of money. To get the money for testing, they apply for grants. This can take a long time.</p>	<p>Because of the public health emergency, our government and private organizations gave billions of dollars. This let researchers do testing without waiting for grants.</p> <p>And, some testing had already happened. Researchers started working on this type of vaccine almost 20 years ago.</p>
Clinical trials	<p>Researchers use clinical trials to make sure vaccines work and are safe. There are 3 phases.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Phase 1: Tests safety on a few people. ▪ Phase 2: Tests safety on a group of people. ▪ Phase 3: Tests safety on a larger group of people, including special populations such as minority groups. 	<p>The government funding helped researchers do some of the phases at the same time, or back-to-back. They did not skip steps. As usual, tens of thousands of people participated in these trials.</p>
Review of safety data, manufacturing process, and authorization for use	<p>The FDA reviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All the data from the clinical trials ▪ Details about how and where the vaccine is made <p>This helps them decide if the vaccine works and if it is safe. If the FDA finds that the vaccine does work and is safe, they will authorize it. But before the public can get it, the ACIP reviews the data. The CDC makes the final approval.</p>	<p>The FDA made sure there were people working to review safety information from the clinical trials. Their workers covered shifts 24 hours per day, 7 days a week.</p> <p>After the FDA reviewed the safety data, they approved an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). An EUA allows the FDA to make certain medical products available for public health emergencies (like pandemics).</p>
Manufacturing and delivery	<p>After the FDA approves the vaccine, the drug companies start making it. It gets ordered and delivered to places who will give vaccines.</p>	<p>Extra funding allowed drug companies to produce millions of doses during the clinical trials. This made vaccines available as soon as the FDA authorized them.</p>
Safety monitoring	<p>The CDC collects information about adverse events for all vaccines after they are available to the public through Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). Anyone can report to this system even if they are not sure if the vaccine caused the possible side effect. Vaccine safety experts decide which reports may be related to the vaccine. Many are not. Researchers and doctors also continue to study the vaccine.</p>	<p>To track side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine, the CDC created v-safe. V-safe provides private health check-ins. This allows the CDC to monitor safety in real time.</p> <p>Also, the CDC requires those who give the vaccine to report any known adverse events to VAERS.</p>

How COVID-19 Vaccines were Developed and Authorized for Use

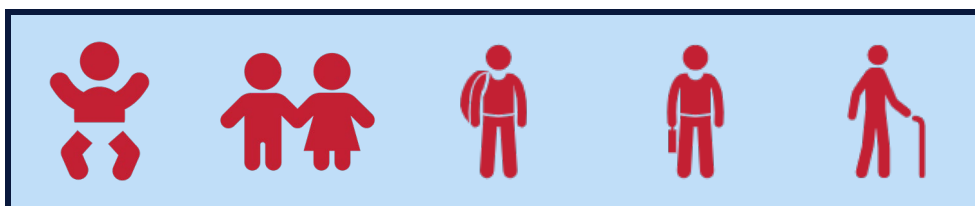
Who has been involved in COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials?

Many different people were involved in the clinical trials. This includes:

- People of color



- People of all ages



- Pregnant women



How COVID-19 Vaccines were Developed and Authorized for Use

Are COVID-19 vaccines fully approved by the FDA?

Some of the drug companies, that originally had an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA), have asked for and received full approval from the FDA for their vaccine.

How did the FDA decide to fully approve these vaccines?

The FDA reviewed data again after some time passed and more people had gotten the vaccine. Their full approval signals that this data shows the same level of safety as it did with the EUA.

What are the ingredients in the COVID-19 vaccine?

Most of the ingredients in COVID-19 vaccines are also found in foods. These include fats, sugars, and salts. Other ingredients are like those in other vaccines. None of the vaccines have eggs, gelatin, latex, or preservatives. All COVID-19 vaccines are free from metals (such as aluminum or mercury).

Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine

Who should get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Most people should get a COVID-19 vaccine. You should get the vaccine even if you have already had COVID-19. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist to learn if you should get the vaccine.

How many doses of a COVID-19 vaccine do I need?



More than 1 drug company makes COVID-19 vaccines. Each one is a bit different. The number of shots you need depends on your health and how long it has been since your last shot.

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist to find out when you need your next shot.

When you get your vaccine, ask if you need another dose and when you should get it.



Write down on your calendar when you will need to get the next dose.

When can I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

You can get it now!

Where do I go to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

You may be able to get the vaccine from your:

- Pharmacy
- Doctor's office
- Arkansas Department of Health local health unit (Find yours at <https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/local-health-units>)
- Some other place: _____



Check the box above to note where you plan to get your vaccine.

To learn where to go to get a vaccine:

- Check the Arkansas Department of Health website: <https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/novel-coronavirus>
- Call: 1-800-985-6030

You can also ask your friends and family who have already gotten a vaccine where they went.

Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine

How much will it cost to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

The vaccine will not cost you anything.

- If you do not have health insurance, you will not pay anything for the vaccine.
- If you have health insurance, the clinic may bill your insurance to pay for their costs of giving you the vaccine and storing it. But you will not pay anything.

What can I expect after I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

After you get a vaccine, no matter what dose, you may have a sore arm or mild cold-like symptoms for a few days. This is your body's response to the vaccine as it works to learn how to fight off the virus. You may not have side effects at all.

Can I get a COVID-19 vaccine if I am pregnant, trying to get pregnant, or breastfeeding?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccines are safe for women who are pregnant, trying to become pregnant, or breastfeeding. It can be very dangerous if you get COVID-19 while you are pregnant because you are more likely to have severe symptoms. This can also harm your baby. But, if you get the vaccine you can pass on immunity to your baby.

Can the COVID-19 vaccines affect my fertility?

No. Vaccines do not cause fertility (ability to have children) problems in women or men.

Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine

Can the mRNA vaccines change my DNA?

No. The mRNA vaccines cannot change your DNA in any way. The vaccine teaches your immune system to fight the virus. After this happens, your body no longer needs the vaccine's ingredients. Your body breaks them down and gets rid of them.

What should I do if I have questions?

- When you go to the clinic or pharmacy to get your vaccine, staff will give you a fact sheet. Because there are different vaccines, the fact sheet will be about the exact vaccine you will get. The sheet will tell you:
 - If there are certain people who should not take the vaccine
 - What ingredients are in the vaccine
 - What side effects you should expect



You may still have questions about the COVID-19 vaccine. You should get all your questions answered before you plan to get the vaccine.

- If you have questions about the vaccine, you can:
 - Talk to your doctor
 - Talk to your pharmacist
 - Contact the Arkansas Department of Health:
 - Visit <https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/novel-coronavirus>
 - Call: 1-800-803-7847
 - Email: ADH.CoronaVirus@arkansas.gov



Write your questions here:

Other Ways to Prevent COVID-19 and its Problems

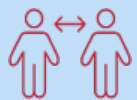
If you get COVID-19, there is no way to know how severe it would be, so it is important that you do what you can to prevent it. You should:



Get the **COVID-19 vaccine**, even if you have already had COVID-19.



Avoid large gatherings and crowded indoor places.



Stay at least 6 feet away from others in public.



Wear a mask if you are in a place where it is required or recommended.



Wash your hands often. If you can, use warm water and soap. Rub your hands together for at least 20 seconds.



Stay at home if you are sick.

Remember!

- COVID-19 is an illness caused by a virus. Everyone is at risk for getting COVID-19.
- New variants of COVID-19 may be easier to spread or cause more serious symptoms.
- Getting the COVID-19 vaccine is the best way to protect yourself from getting it.
- You can get the vaccine now. It will not cost you anything.
- Drug companies did not skip steps to develop this vaccine.
- The FDA confirmed that the vaccine is safe, and it works. The vaccine cannot give you COVID-19.
- Most people should get the COVID-19 vaccine.

To learn more visit:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- The United States Food and Drug Administration: <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/counterterrorism-and-emerging-threats/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>
- Vaccinate Your Family: <https://vaccinateyourfamily.org/questions-about-vaccines/covid19faq/>
- The American Academy of Pediatrics: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx>

Some of the information in this book came from:

- The Arkansas Department of Health: <https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/novel-coronavirus>
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html>
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#demographics>
- Pfizer: <https://www.pfizer.com/news/press-release/press-release-detail/pfizer-and-biontech-announce-publication-results-landmark>
- The United States Food and Drug Administration: <https://www.fda.gov/vaccines-blood-biologics/development-approval-process-cber/vaccine-development-101>

This information was fact-checked by:

- Doctors and staff at the Arkansas Department of Health
- Pharmacists and staff from Immunize Arkansas

