

# IT'S TIME!

## The COVID vaccine is here!

Time to protect yourself, your family and your community by getting immunized.

## Questions about the COVID-19 vaccine? We have answers.

### Who should get the vaccine?

Everyone 18 and older who is not allergic to the vaccines or their components. The vaccines have not yet been studied thoroughly in pregnant women or in children, but pregnant women should discuss vaccination with their physician.

### Why should I get the vaccine?

The COVID-19 vaccine is our best chance at stopping this deadly disease. It is the single most important thing we can do to protect ourselves and others. Getting the vaccine:

- **Protects you:** With the approved vaccines, there's up to a 95% chance that you'll personally be protected from getting COVID-19.
- **Protects those around you:** If you get sick, you could spread the virus to others. Getting the vaccine, while continuing to wear a mask and practice social distancing, will help keep others safe, especially those who may be at high risk.
- **Protects your community:** For the vaccine to be effective against COVID-19, we need 50% to 80% of our community to get vaccinated. Even though we have to continue to wear a mask and take other precautions, every person who gets vaccinated is an important step in the right direction.

COVID-19 vaccines are the most important public health strategy for slowing the spread of this virus, and we strongly encourage you to consider getting it.

### I've already had COVID-19, do I need the vaccine?

Yes. Even if you have had COVID-19 previously, you are still encouraged to get vaccinated after you have recovered. According to immunologists, the vaccine will likely protect you longer than the antibodies after a COVID-19 infection. And it's safer!

### Which vaccine will I get?

Depending on availability, you may either receive the Pfizer vaccine OR the Moderna vaccine. You will not receive both.

## How many doses will I need?

You will need two doses of the Pfizer vaccine spaced 21 days apart. The Moderna vaccine also requires two doses, but they are spaced 28 days apart. Signing up, marking calendars, and showing up for the second dose will help us to ensure there are no wasted doses. Other vaccines, once approved for emergency use, may follow different protocols.

## Do I have to get my second dose at exactly 21 days for Pfizer or 28 for Moderna?

The CDC continues to recommend that people get their second dose of COVID-19 vaccine as close to the recommended interval as possible (3 weeks for Pfizer and one month for Moderna).

They have updated their guidance to allow for second dose up to 6 weeks (42 days) after the first if it is not feasible to meet the recommended interval. CDC is not advocating for people to delay getting their second dose, but the data from clinical trials support this range.

There are currently limited data on the effectiveness of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines given beyond this window. If the second dose is administered beyond these intervals, there is no need to restart the series.

## How does a mRNA vaccine work?

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are a mRNA vaccine. **While this is a new technology, please know it has been in development for more than 10 years.**

- In less scientific terms, mRNA technology helps the vaccine give instructions to our own human cells to make a harmless component that looks similar to the main protein on the surface of the virus. Our immune system recognizes this component as the virus and our body sends warning signals that this protein should not be here. The body then develops antibodies to recognize and fight the virus in the future.
- A mRNA vaccine does NOT contain the virus, there is no way to catch COVID-19 from the vaccine.

## Are they effective?

All medications and vaccines must undergo a rigorous testing process, including the COVID-19 vaccines. In Pfizer's phase 3 trial with around 44,000 participants, their vaccine was proven to be effective in preventing the COVID-19 virus 95% of the time after the second dose. And it was shown to have similar efficacy across age groups, genders, racial and ethnic groups, and people with medical conditions associated with a high risk of severe COVID-19. The Moderna vaccine has similar results with 94% efficacy.

## Are they safe?

The FDA has found no specific safety concerns with the vaccines. Millions of doses have now been given safely. Pfizer's and Moderna's vaccines went through the same scientific processes as other trials using all of the same tried and true safety protocols. The companies were able to save a lot of time by manufacturing the vaccines at the same time they were being studied. **Note:** You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccines.

## Are there side effects?

If experienced, side effects are mild to moderate and short lived. Much like the flu vaccine, most side effects happen in the first few days and may include fever, chills, fatigue, headache, muscle and joint pain and injection site soreness. These side effects may be experienced after each of the two doses.

## If I have an existing medical condition, will they still be safe for me?

These vaccines appear to be safe with almost any medical condition, but if you have questions, please talk to your primary care doctor about whether you should get vaccinated. They know your personal health story best.

## When will I start to have immunity following the COVID-19 vaccine?

It is important to remember, you will start to have some immunity (approximately 50%) seven days after your first dose. Full 94% to 95% protection only happens at about two weeks after the 2nd dose. The longer you wait in between doses, the more your chances increase that your immunity will lessen before you get your 2nd shot and you will be at greater risk for catching the virus.

## Should I be worried about COVID-19 variants?

The newly-identified COVID-19 variants seem to spread more easily, which may lead to more cases of COVID-19. An increase in the number of cases will put more strain on healthcare resources, lead to more hospitalizations and potentially more deaths.

So far, studies suggest that antibodies generated through vaccination with currently authorized vaccines recognize these variants and provide a good level of protection. We do not yet know the exact effectiveness against the new variants – they are being closely investigated with more studies are underway.

It is more important than ever to continue to follow COVID-19 precautions such as vaccination, physical distancing, use of masks, hand hygiene and isolation and quarantine. This is essential to limit the spread of the virus and protect our communities.

## Do the new COVID-19 vaccines contain eggs, milk or preservatives? I am allergic.

Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine are made the same way, and neither one includes ingredients such as eggs, milk or preservatives. A list of the components is below:

<b>Ingredients* included in mRNA COVID-19 vaccines</b>		
<b>Description</b>	<b>Pfizer-BioNTech</b>	<b>Moderna</b>
mRNA	Nucleoside-modified mRNA encoding the viral spike (S) glycoprotein of SARS-CoV-2	Nucleoside-modified mRNA encoding the viral spike (S) glycoprotein of SARS-CoV-2
Lipids	2[(polyethylene glycol)-2000]-N,N-ditetradecylacetamide	Polyethylene glycol (PEG) 2000 dimyristoyl glycerol (DMG)
	1,2-distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine	1,2-distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine
	Cholesterol	Cholesterol
	(4-hydroxybutyl)azanediyl)bis(hexane-6,1-diyl)bis(2-hexyldecanoate)	SM-102
Salts, sugars, buffers	Potassium chloride	Tromethamine
	Monobasic potassium phosphate	Tromethamine hydrochloride
	Sodium chloride	Acetic acid
	Dibasic sodium phosphate dihydrate	Sodium acetate
	Sucrose	sucrose

*COURTESY: CDC*

You should balance the possible risk of an allergic reaction and the almost certainty that you will eventually get infected with COVID-19. Unless there is a known allergy to one of the components of the vaccine, the risk of COVID-19 causing death is higher than the risk of an allergy. Allergic reactions can be treated. If you are concerned about an allergic reaction, we encourage you to talk with your primary care physician as they understand your specific health situation best.

### **What do they cost?**

The vaccines will be available to everyone **free of charge** whether you have insurance or not. Your insurance will be billed if you have coverage, but there will be no money due from anyone receiving the vaccine.

### **I am breastfeeding and worried that the vaccine would pass unknown effects to my infant.**

There is no particular reason to believe the vaccine is unsafe for the breastfeeding child and your immunity may actually help protect the baby. Catching the virus and potentially becoming dangerously ill would be a bigger problem for your baby than the vaccine risk appears to be.

### **I am pregnant, should I get the vaccine?**

At this time the vaccine has not been specifically studied in women who are pregnant. However, more than 10,000 pregnant women have received the vaccine, with no red flags seen so far. It is important that you talk to your primary care physician to determine the best path for you.

### **While not pregnant yet, I am planning to start a family soon. Should I get the vaccine?**

There are internet rumors and myths not based in fact about the vaccine impacting fertility. While the vaccine hasn't been studied in pregnant women, there isn't a biological rationale for it impacting fertility.

Here is additional information from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG):

- Vaccination is strongly encouraged for non-pregnant individuals within the prioritization group(s).
- ACOG recommends vaccination of individuals who are actively trying to become pregnant or are considering pregnancy and meet the criteria for vaccination based on prioritization groups.
- It is not necessary to delay pregnancy after completing both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

If an individual becomes pregnant after the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine series, the second dose should be administered as indicated. If an individual receives a COVID-19 vaccine and becomes pregnant within 30 days of receipt of the vaccine, participation in CDC's V-SAFE program is encouraged.

### **Do I still need to wear a mask after I'm vaccinated?**

Yes. You will still need to wear a mask because while the scientific research is strong that the vaccine protects you from the virus, it likely doesn't prevent everyone from spreading the virus to others.

## Can I get vaccinated at a Goshen Health location?

Yes. Goshen Health vaccine clinic has been offering vaccinations since Jan. 31, beginning with healthcare workers and people over age 80 and moving down to younger ages as the state opens up eligibility. To find out the most up-to-date eligibility requirements, visit [GoshenHealth.com](http://GoshenHealth.com) or [OurShot.IN.gov](http://OurShot.IN.gov) or watch the media for announcements.

## We understand you may be nervous about the vaccine, that is understandable! Take care to know the facts as you make this important decision for you and your family:

- The vaccine has received Emergency Use Authorization from the FDA after completing three phases of testing involving thousands of participants.
- Remember, both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are a two-part vaccine, so you must get a second dose for it to provide immunity. Pfizer is 21 days later, Moderna is 28 days later.
- If you have had COVID-19 previously, it is still important that you get the vaccination.
- If you have more questions, don't forget to speak to your primary care physician about your questions – they know you and your health story best!
- And for more research, you can visit [CDC.gov](http://CDC.gov) or [Coronavirus.IN.gov](http://Coronavirus.IN.gov).

Please, consider taking this step to protect yourself, your family, and your friends and neighbors by getting the COVID-19 vaccine. We should all be looking forward to the peace of mind having this level of protection will bring.

