

 Expert View

## 7 Reassuring Facts About the COVID-19 Vaccines

Vaccines are key to moving forward from the pandemic and seeing your loved ones again.



Dr. Francisco García



The coronavirus (COVID-19) has had a devastating toll on our communities. This is especially true among older adults, people of color, people with low incomes, and those doing frontline service work. It's the first disease in years that has lowered life expectancy

in the United States.

But now we have highly effective tools—approved COVID-19 vaccines—to prevent serious illness and deaths caused by the virus. Hundreds of millions of Americans have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. Nonpregnant and pregnant women can choose to get any of the available COVID-19 vaccines.

These vaccines will prevent illness and save lives. They will curb the spread of COVID-19 in our communities and help end the pandemic.

I have heard many questions about the COVID-19 vaccines, as a physician and public health official in Arizona. I'm glad to be able to give reassuring answers. Here are some key things to know.

## 1. The vaccines are safe, even though they were made quickly.

The approved COVID-19 vaccines are very safe. The vaccines came to market quickly, and I know that makes some people nervous. But the speed is a sign of how much money and resources were put into making the vaccines. All of the usual steps to [make and test vaccines](#) were still included in the process.

Also, the process was faster than other new vaccines because the science behind the COVID-19 vaccines is not new. The technology used in the vaccines had been in development for decades. So the scientists were not starting from scratch when they made these vaccines.

Thorough safety studies were done when the vaccines were made, and ongoing [safety monitoring](#) is the most intense in U.S. history. These safety checks have shown that serious side effects are very rare.

These safety checks have found and addressed a few rare risks that may be related to the vaccines. One is the [risk of blood clots](#) after receiving the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Another is the potential risk of inflammation of the heart muscle ([myocarditis](#)) in male teens and young adults who get the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines. Scientists have reviewed the reports and decided the benefits of the vaccines are greater than these very rare risks.

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The fact that we know about these reports and that they are carefully reviewed by experts and discussed with the public is a good sign. It means that the process is working as expected, and that officials are being open and honest.

Our high confidence in safety keeps growing as millions of people continue to be vaccinated without serious issues.

## 2. The vaccines give you powerful protection against the virus.

The vaccines work extremely well to protect people from getting sick or severely ill with COVID-19. All of the vaccines are highly effective.

[Data published in May](#) looked at how well the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines work in the real world versus in clinical trials. It showed that full vaccination (two doses with these vaccines) prevents 94 percent of infections with symptoms. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine, which requires only one dose for full vaccination, is also highly effective.

Based on current data, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) scientists also believe that the vaccines help protect you from the COVID-19 [variants](#) found in this country.

Variants are slightly different versions of the virus. There are dangerous variants that can spread more easily than the original virus, and some of them are becoming more common in the U.S. The CDC is tracking how well the vaccines work against the variants, but early studies suggest that the vaccines still offer protection.

## 3. The vaccines are free and widely available.

There are enough vaccines for everyone. All of them are free. They are available for all adults and children age 12 and older, depending on the type of vaccine.

You do not need health insurance or a social security number to get a vaccine. And everyone has the right to get a COVID-19 vaccine [regardless of your immigration status](#).

The CDC website can [help you find a vaccine](#) near you.

## 4. The vaccines will not make you sick with COVID-19.

None of the vaccines contain any living COVID-19 virus. That means it's not possible for them to make you sick with the virus.

Instead, they teach your immune system to spot and fight off COVID-19. In some people the vaccines cause short-term [side effects](#). These can include pain in the arm in which you got your shot, tiredness, and fever.

These side effects show that your body is building protection against COVID-19, not that you have the virus. They go away on their own after a few days. And side effects vary from person to person. Some people have only mild side effects or none at all. Remember that short-term side effects from the vaccine are better than severe illness from the virus.

## 5. The vaccines do not affect your fertility.

There is a lot of false information out there about the vaccines. One common question to clear up: The COVID-19 vaccines do not cause infertility.

The science of [how the vaccines are made](#) makes us confident that the vaccines are not a cause of infertility. And [a recent study](#) has confirmed this. It showed that women who had the COVID-19 vaccines were able to get pregnant at the same rates as women who did not get the vaccines.

We recommend vaccination for all people who may want to get pregnant in the future.

## 6. Vaccination protects you, your family, and your community.

When you protect yourself from COVID-19, you're protecting children, older relatives, and your community too. The more people who are vaccinated, the harder it is for the virus to spread.

This is important because some people can't be vaccinated. There's not yet a COVID-19 vaccine for children younger than 12, for example. And young children most often get the

vaccine for children younger than 12, for example. And young children most often get the virus from someone in their household. This means that for families with infants and young children, vaccination gives the whole household important protection.

There also are people who have medical conditions or allergies that mean they cannot get vaccinated. When you get vaccinated, you protect yourself *and* the people in your family and community.

## 7. When you are fully vaccinated, it's safe for you to do many activities again.

With any of the vaccines, you are fully vaccinated 2 weeks after your final dose of vaccine. The CDC says people who are fully vaccinated can go back to indoor and outdoor activities in small or large groups.

You may choose to keep wearing a mask even if you are fully vaccinated. All fully vaccinated people should still wear masks when [recommended by the CDC](#), your state or local government, and businesses or workplaces.

The CDC also says it's safe for you to [travel within the United States](#). Learn more from the CDC about [what you can do when you're fully vaccinated](#).

The bottom line is simple: vaccination works! Along with other tools, such as continuing to wear a mask where needed, vaccines help bring life back to normal. Getting a vaccine is a key way to get us back to spending time with friends and family in person.

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