

COVID-19 FAQs

EDUCATION RESOURCES FOR THE HISPANIC FAITH COMMUNITY

Here are some of the most frequently asked questions we've heard from the Hispanic Faith Community. These questions have been vetted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). To learn more and to get the most up-to-date information, please visit getvaccineanswers.org

FAQS

1. How are COVID-19 vaccines authorized and approved for use?
2. How are vaccines tested for safety?
3. How were the COVID-19 vaccines made so quickly?
4. Did the clinical trials include people like me?
5. How do these vaccines protect me?
6. How do I get vaccinated against COVID-19?
7. If I've already had COVID, when can I take the vaccine?
8. What's it like to get vaccinated against COVID-19?
9. Are there side effects to the vaccine?
10. How long will the vaccine last in my body? Will I need a yearly dose?
11. Do I have to show proof of citizenship to get vaccine?
12. How many people need to get vaccinated?
13. What types of vaccines are there?
14. What type of vaccine will I get?
15. How much does the vaccine cost?
16. Do I still have to wear a mask?
17. Do vaccines protect against new variants?
18. What are the differences in the vaccines?
19. How are they authorized and approved for use?

1. HOW ARE COVID-19 VACCINES AUTHORIZED AND APPROVED FOR USE?

Researchers began developing vaccines for COVID-19 in January 2020, based on decades of understanding immune response and how vaccines work. Thousands of volunteers participated in clinical trials that started that spring, making sure we can trust the vaccines to be safe and effective.

Based on the results, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized multiple vaccines for public use. Recommended vaccines have met the agency's rigorous and science-based standards for quality, safety, and effectiveness.

COVID-19 is a new virus requiring new vaccines, but vaccines have been saving lives and protecting us for centuries. Now, medical experts believe COVID-19 vaccines can help us move forward in our everyday lives.

As of August 2021, FDA has fully approved a COVID-19 vaccine.

2. HOW ARE VACCINES TESTED FOR SAFETY?

Every vaccine must go through rigorous testing and inspection to ensure it is safe.

Vaccines for COVID-19 followed a 3-phase process where there are several stages before FDA authorization:

Phase 1: The vaccine is tested in a small number of generally healthy adults, usually between 20 and 80 people. It's evaluated for safety, dosage, and any side effects. Experts also look at what type of immune response is created.

Phase 2: If there are no safety concerns from Phase 1 studies, the vaccine is given in various dosages to hundreds of adults who may have a variety of health issues and come from different backgrounds to make sure it is safe. These studies provide additional safety information on common short-term side effects and risks, examine the relationship between the dose given and the immune response, and may provide initial information regarding the effectiveness of the vaccine.

Phase 3: Experts broaden the study to include thousands of adults, from a variety of ages and backgrounds. They see how many people who got the vaccine were protected from the disease, compared to those who received a placebo.

3. HOW WERE THE COVID-19 VACCINES MADE SO QUICKLY?

The science behind the breakthrough had a head start. Researchers had already made progress developing vaccines for other types of coronaviruses: they applied lessons learned after the 2003 SARS epidemic and the 2012 MERS outbreak. They also learned a lot from creating a vaccine for Ebola — which isn't a coronavirus but has taught us more about viruses.

The rapid spread of COVID-19 made developing these vaccines an international priority, unlocking billions of dollars in funding to ensure safety while moving with urgency to save lives.

Many researchers and medical experts have come together to develop vaccines while still meeting the FDA's rigorous requirements for safety and effectiveness. While regulators have streamlined some steps in the vaccine authorization process, the vaccines still needed to meet the agency's rigorous, scientific standards for safety, effectiveness, and manufacturing quality.

4. DID THE CLINICAL TRIALS INCLUDE PEOPLE LIKE ME?

Researchers made sure that the trials included adults of diverse backgrounds, races, ethnicities, and geographic areas. They collaborated with faith leaders, community organizations, and health clinics to reach volunteers from many different walks of life across the United States.

Medical experts and doctors want to make sure the vaccines work safely and effectively for as many people as possible. People may respond differently to vaccines based on factors like age, gender, and health conditions — so it is important to have a diverse group of participants in clinical trials.

COVID-19 has hit hard in the Black and Hispanic communities. Historically, these populations haven't always been included in clinical research, but

with COVID-19 vaccines researchers made sure volunteers included people of color, as well as people over the age of 65 who are at higher risk of complications from the virus.

At this time, the studies do not include pregnant women or young children, but testing with those groups will likely begin in the near future. Pregnant women who get infected with COVID-19 disease are more likely to have severe disease.

People who are pregnant and part of a group recommended to receive COVID-19 vaccine, such as healthcare personnel, may choose to be vaccinated. A conversation between pregnant patients and their clinicians may help them decide whether to get vaccinated.

5. HOW DO THESE VACCINES PROTECT ME?

When we get a vaccine, it activates our immune response. This helps our bodies learn to fight off the virus without the danger of an actual infection. If we are exposed to the virus in the future, our immune system “remembers” how to fight it.

Some COVID-19 vaccines use messenger RNA, or mRNA. mRNA vaccines do not contain a live virus — they give our bodies “instructions” for how to make and fight the harmless spike-shaped proteins that will protect against a COVID-19 infection. While these vaccines use new technology, researchers have been studying them for decades.

6. HOW DO I GET VACCINATED AGAINST COVID-19?

State and local governments will ultimately decide when each group gets access to vaccines based on the local supply. That way, communities can set the priorities that work for them. The federal government does not mandate vaccines or set the rules for each community.

As more vaccines are produced over the winter and spring of 2021, more people will be able to get vaccinated based on recommendations from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the CDC.

If you have questions, make sure you talk to your doctor. Some people — like pregnant women or people with certain severe allergies — might be told to wait to get a specific vaccine once it's available.

Your doctor should be able to tell you when and where you can get your shots. It might be at a hospital, the doctor's office, a pharmacy, or a drive- thru clinic.

7. IF I'VE ALREADY HAD COVID, WHEN CAN I TAKE THE VACCINE?

If you've had COVID-19 in the past 90 days, talk to your doctor about when you should get vaccinated. People who have already had COVID-19 should still eventually get vaccinated to ensure they are protected.

Over the next few months, with more and more people getting vaccinated, we will find out more about how the vaccines protect people who have already had COVID-19.

COVID-19 vaccination should be offered to you regardless of whether you already had COVID-19 infection. You should not be required to have an antibody test before you are vaccinated.

However, anyone currently infected with COVID-19 should wait to get vaccinated until after their illness has resolved and after they have met the criteria to discontinue isolation.

8. WHAT'S IT LIKE TO GET VACCINATED AGAINST COVID-19?

Getting a COVID-19 vaccine will be a lot like getting any other shot.

When you go in, you'll be given a fact sheet that tells you more about the specific vaccine you're being offered.

Once you've had the vaccine, you will receive a vaccination card with the date, location, and type of vaccine you received. You might also get a card reminding you when to come back for the second shot.

The supply of vaccines will increase in the coming weeks and months. We expect several thousand vaccine providers across the country to offer

vaccines — including doctors' offices, hospitals, pharmacy chains like CVS and Walgreens, and certain other qualified healthcare centers.

9. ARE THERE SIDE EFFECTS?

It's normal to experience some mild discomfort following a vaccine. This means it's working and creating an immune response in your body.

You may feel soreness or experience some swelling in your arm. You may also feel tired, have a headache, fever, or chills. These symptoms do not mean you have COVID-19 — it's not possible to get COVID-19 from the vaccine.

These symptoms may impact your daily activities, but they shouldn't last more than 2-3 days. If they continue or get worse, call your doctor, nurse, or clinic.

Even if you have these types of effects after your first shot, it's important to make sure you get the second one, unless a vaccination provider or your doctor tells you not to get a second shot. Ask your doctor

if you have questions. Your body takes time to build immunity. You may not be fully protected against COVID-19 until 1-2 weeks after your second shot.

In most cases, discomfort from fever or pain is normal. Contact your doctor or healthcare provider:

- If the redness or tenderness where you got the shot increases after 24 hours
- If your symptoms are worrying you or do not seem to be going away after a few days
- If you get a COVID-19 vaccine and you think you might be having a severe allergic reaction after leaving the vaccination site, seek immediate medical care by calling 911. Learn more about COVID-19 vaccines and rare severe allergic reactions.

10. HOW LONG WILL THE VACCINE LAST IN MY BODY? WILL I NEED A YEARLY DOSE?

Immunization against COVID-19 will help protect you for the near future, but it's still not clear how long the protection will last. We will have a clearer picture of how long immunity lasts in years to come when

we have collected more data. Both natural immunity and immunity from the vaccine are important ways to fight COVID-19 that experts are trying to learn more about, and places like the CDC will keep the public informed as new evidence becomes available.

11. DO I HAVE TO SHOW PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP TO GET VACCINE?

CDC does not require United States citizenship for individuals to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

12. HOW MANY PEOPLE NEED TO GET VACCINATED?

Medical experts do not know exactly what percentage of people would need to get vaccinated to achieve herd immunity to COVID-19. Herd immunity is a term used to describe when enough people have protection — either from previous infection or vaccination — that it is unlikely a virus or bacteria can spread and cause disease. As a result, everyone within the community is protected even if some people don't have any protection themselves. The percentage of people who need to have protection in order to achieve herd immunity varies by disease.

13. WHAT TYPES OF VACCINES ARE THERE?

Many vaccines work with harmless pieces of the spike-shaped proteins on the outer shell of the virus, instead of the entire virus. These proteins aren't infectious — our immune system recognizes that the virus' proteins in the vaccine don't belong in our body and learns how to fight them off.

Messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines teach our body how to make the harmless protein pieces and protect us from the viruses that contain them. This produces antibodies, which are part of our body's immune system defenses, that fight off the virus if it enters our bodies. It's important to note that mRNA vaccines help build protection to a very specific type of protein and do not interact with our DNA in any way.

14. WHAT TYPE OF VACCINE WILL I GET?

While supplies are limited, if you are in one of the groups recommended to take the vaccine, you will need to get whichever vaccine is available in your area. It's possible that in the coming months, as production increases and more vaccines get approved for use, that people will have options for which shot to get.

The bottom line is that every vaccine that gets through the authorization process has been thoroughly tested and proven to be effective and safe. You should feel confident that your experience will be similar regardless of which shot you get.

You'll get a card or fact sheet at your vaccination site that will tell you about the vaccine and help you understand the details. Your card will tell you which kind of vaccine you get and when to get the second dose, if applicable.

15. HOW MUCH DOES THE VACCINE COST?

There shouldn't be a cost to get vaccinated. Insurance providers will cover the cost of the vaccine, and the U.S. government has set up a system to cover costs for those who do not have insurance.

Vaccine doses bought by the U.S. government will be given to the public for free, however, vaccination providers will be able to charge an administration fee for giving the shot to someone. Vaccine providers can get this fee reimbursed by the patient's public or private insurance company or, for uninsured patients, by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund.

16. DO I STILL HAVE TO WEAR A MASK?

Yes. Until enough Americans are vaccinated, it's important to continue to wear a mask, stay 6 feet apart from people you don't live with, avoid crowds, and wash your hands frequently.

Researchers are working to understand whether you can still carry the virus and spread it to others if you've had the vaccine and are protected from getting sick.

Continuing to wear a mask helps protect others while we learn more about how COVID-19 spreads. It also helps protect people who are not able to get vaccinated — such as pregnant women or young children.

17. DO VACCINES PROTECT AGAINST NEW VARIANTS?

New variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 illness have emerged. Current data suggest that COVID-19 vaccines used in the United States should work against these variants. For this reason, COVID-19 vaccines are an essential tool to protect people against COVID-19, including against new variants. CDC recommends getting vaccinated as soon as a vaccine is available to you.

The Delta variant is dangerous and more contagious than the original COVID-19 virus. The good news is that all authorized vaccines provide strong protection against serious illness and hospitalization from the Delta variant.

18. WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES IN THE VACCINES?

All authorized COVID-19 vaccines provide significant protection from serious illness and hospitalization. Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 and following CDC's recommendations to protect yourself and others will offer the best protection from COVID-19.

The Moderna vaccine is recommended for people age 18+ and includes 2 shots spaced 28 days apart. It is a messenger RNA, or mRNA, vaccine. Based on evidence from clinical trials, the Moderna vaccine was 94% effective at preventing COVID-19 and provides significant protection against serious illness.

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is recommended for people age 16+ and include 2 shots spaced 21 days apart. It is an mRNA vaccine. Based on evidence from clinical trials, the Pfizer vaccine was 91% effective at preventing COVID-19 and provides significant protection against serious illness.

Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine is a viral vector vaccine and is delivered in one shot only. Based on evidence from clinical trials, the Johnson & Johnson vaccine was 72% effective at preventing COVID-19 and provides significant protection against serious illness. Health officials are closely monitoring all vaccines for safety, including the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Having multiple vaccines is crucial so that vaccination programs can quickly reach as many people as possible.

As of August 2021, the FDA has fully approved the Pfizer vaccine (Comirnaty) for use in the United States.

19. HOW ARE THEY AUTHORIZED AND APPROVED FOR USE?

Researchers began developing vaccines for COVID-19 in January 2020, based on decades of understanding immune response and how vaccines work. Thousands of volunteers participated in clinical trials that started that spring, making sure we can trust the vaccines to be safe and effective.

Based on the results, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized multiple vaccines for public use. Recommended vaccines have met the agency's rigorous and science-based standards for quality, safety, and effectiveness.

COVID-19 is a new virus requiring new vaccines, but vaccines have been saving lives and protecting us for centuries. Now, medical experts believe COVID-19 vaccines can help us move forward in our everyday lives.

As of August 2021, FDA has fully approved a COVID-19 vaccine.

For more resources to make informed decisions about COVID-19
visit Faithcommunityvaccin toolkit.org