

4 Reasons Why Getting the COVID-19 Vaccine Matters

Reason #1: COVID-19 Can Affect Your Health

Anyone at any age can get COVID-19. Most people will have mild or no symptoms and recover fairly quickly. But for some, COVID-19 can be severe and even deadly. It is especially dangerous for adults and children who have certain health conditions, the elderly, and people who are pregnant or smoke.

Conditions that can put you at a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 include:

- Obesity or being overweight
- Asthma and certain chronic (long-term) lung conditions
- Diabetes
- Certain heart conditions
- Chronic kidney or liver disease
- Sickle cell disease
- Cancer
- Down syndrome
- A weakened immune system

Not all conditions are shown here. Talk to your doctor to see if you may be at a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

Reason #2: COVID-19 Can Also Affect Your Health Down the Road

COVID-19 can damage many different organs and systems in your body. This means that anyone -- even people who only had mild illness -- can have long-lasting symptoms and complications (additional problems) from COVID-19 and post-COVID conditions. Post-COVID conditions -- or "long COVID" -- are new, returning, or ongoing health problems that happen 4 or more weeks after first being infected, even in people who didn't have any symptoms.

Getting the COVID-19 vaccine is a safer way to help you build immunity to COVID-19 than getting the disease. This is because, even if you feel healthy, you run the risk of severe illness, complications, and the damaging effects COVID-19 can have on your body.



Reason #3: The Vaccines Protect You and Others by Helping You Build Immunity

Most people who get COVID-19 are unvaccinated. The COVID-19 vaccine can help protect you from infection, serious illness, and death from COVID-19. Getting the vaccine also helps lower the chances of spreading COVID-19, which can help protect those around you.

Vaccines are given before an infection to try to prevent disease or more severe disease. They work by triggering your immune system -- your body's natural defense system -- to make antibodies when you're exposed to an outside invader, such as the virus that causes COVID-19, to attack the invader and fight off infection. Antibodies then stay in your body and can recognize and defend against the invader if you're exposed again later. This is how you develop protection, or immunity, against a future infection.



Reason #4: The Vaccines Are Safe

The COVID-19 vaccines have been shown to be safe. The vaccines don't interact with your DNA (genetic material) in any way, so they can't affect or change your genes. And you can't get COVID-19 from the vaccines because they don't contain the live virus that causes COVID-19.

All medicines, including vaccines, can have side effects. Some that may happen with COVID-19 vaccines can include:

- Pain, tenderness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given, or lymph node swelling in that arm
- Headache
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Fever, chills
- Muscle or joint aches or pain
- Nausea, vomiting
- Rash

There is a small chance that some people may have a severe allergic reaction or, depending on which vaccine you get, other serious side effects. Not all side effects are listed here, so be sure to ask your doctor, pharmacist, or the person giving you your vaccine for a full list and when you should contact your doctor or seek medical attention because of side effects.

Questions you can ask your doctor about COVID-19 vaccines can include:

Which vaccines are available, and how many shots will I need?

Where can I get a vaccine?

If I've had COVID-19, should I still get a vaccine?

What can I expect when I get the vaccine, and what are the possible side effects?

When will I be fully protected, and what should I do after my shot?