

VACCINE FACTS FOR PROVIDERS: COVID-19 Vaccine Guidance Tool for Patient Inquiries

Many patients have questions about the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccines. As their most-trusted source of information on vaccines, you play a critical role in helping them understand the importance of COVID-19 vaccination.

The Indiana Department of Health asks that you:

- Engage in conversations with patients who are hesitant or who have questions about the COVID-19 vaccine
- Remind them that the vaccine is free, but if the patient has insurance, the plan will be charged a vaccine administration fee
- Explain potential side effects and ask patients to sign up for V-safe, an after vaccination health checker from the CDC, at vsafe.cdc.gov
- Visit [OurShot.in.gov](https://ourshot.in.gov) and click on the For Healthcare Providers tab for additional physician information including fact sheets and flyers, as well as links to additional resource.

Tips:

- Update your office telephone greeting system to say: "We are encouraging our patients to receive the COVID-19 vaccine when it is available and offered to them. You may visit ourshot.in.gov to find out who can get the vaccine in Indiana."
- Refer patients to ourshot.in.gov to find out if they're eligible or to make an appointment.
- Train staff to assist patients who need help scheduling the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Let your patients know that you recommend the vaccine for them.

Examples:

- *"I strongly recommend you get a COVID-19 vaccine once it is available to you..."*
- *"... This shot is especially important for you because of your [job/underlying health condition]."*
- *"... I believe in this vaccine so strongly that I've already received my vaccine."*

Common patient questions and answers:

- **Can I get the vaccine in your office?** Right now the vaccine supplies are limited, so I don't have vaccine to give in my office yet. You can find a map of vaccination sites and make an appointment at [OurShot.in.gov](https://ourshot.in.gov) or by calling 211.
- **How do I know the vaccine is safe?** COVID-19 vaccines were tested for safety in large clinical trials with tens of thousands of people. The timeframe between trials and vaccine production was shortened, but not the trials themselves.
- **What about long-range studies?** The CDC has an independent group of experts that reviews all the safety data as they come in and provides regular safety updates. Any possible problems will be immediately investigated to find out if the issue is related to the COVID-19 vaccine.
- **Are the vaccines effective? Yes!** Pfizer's vaccine is 95% effective, and Moderna's 94%, in preventing COVID-19. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is waiting for approval from the FDA. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is only one dose and may be less effective at preventing COVID-19 (72% in US clinical trials), but it is highly effective (85%) at preventing serious illness if you do catch the virus.
- **Are the vaccines effective against the new variants I keep hearing about?** We are still learning about the variants, and the vaccines' effectiveness. The vaccines may be less effective against some variants. Bottom line is some protection is better than none.
- **Can kids get this vaccine?** Mostly, no. Moderna vaccine is approved for use in people 18 and older, while the Pfizer vaccine is approved for people 16 and older. Clinical trials including younger children are underway.
- **What about my allergies? Is it safe for me?** If you have ever had a severe allergic reaction to any ingredient in a mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) or to polysorbate, you should not get the mRNA COVID-19 vaccines. If you have had an immediate allergic reaction of any severity to other vaccines or injectable therapies, you should discuss this with your doctor before getting the COVID-19 vaccine. It is important to know that you may still get vaccinated if you have severe allergies to oral medications, food, pets, insect stings, latex, or environmental irritants like pollen or dust.

Common patient questions and answers (continued):

• **What are the ingredients?**

The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine includes the following ingredients: mRNA, lipids ((4-hydroxybutyl)azanediyl)bis(hexane-6,1-diyl)bis(2-hexyldecanoate), 2 [(polyethylene glycol)-2000]-N,N-ditetradecylacetamide, 1,2-Distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine, and cholesterol), potassium chloride, monobasic potassium phosphate, sodium chloride, dibasic sodium phosphate dihydrate, and sucrose.

The Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine contains the following ingredients: messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA), lipids (SM-102, polyethylene glycol [PEG] 2000 dimyristoyl glycerol [DMG], cholesterol, and 1,2-distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine [DSPC]), tromethamine, tromethamine hydrochloride, acetic acid, sodium acetate, and sucrose.

- **What if I'm pregnant?** Based on how these vaccines work, experts believe they are unlikely to pose a risk for pregnant patients. If you are pregnant, you may choose to get vaccinated when the vaccine is available to you.
- **Have these vaccines been tested on all populations? Yes.** These vaccines were tested in a diverse group of people. About 30% of U.S. participants were Hispanic, African American, Asian, or Native American. About half were older adults. There were no safety concerns identified in these or any other groups.
- **Isn't natural immunity better than immunity from a vaccine?** Both this disease and the vaccine are new. We know that COVID-19 has caused very serious illness and death for a lot of people. If you get COVID-19, you also risk giving it to loved ones who may get sick. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is a safer choice.
- **What are the side effects?** Most people do not have serious problems after getting the vaccine. However, your arm may be sore or swollen. These symptoms usually go away on their own within a week. Some people report getting a headache, fever, fatigue, or body aches after getting a vaccine. These side effects are more common after the second shot. They are signs that your immune system is doing exactly what it is supposed to do. It is working and building up protection against COVID-19.
- **What if I have a concerning side effect?** You can always call your doctor. It is also important to report any adverse side effects to VAERS, the [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System](#). Before you get your first vaccine dose, you should also sign up for V-safe, an after vaccination health checker, from the CDC at vsafe.cdc.gov.
- **Can I get COVID from the vaccine? No.** This vaccine is not a live virus.
- **Does the vaccine have a microchip, make people infertile or change my DNA?** I assure you that the vaccine doesn't do any of those things. It has been through large clinical trial. The vaccine was made available quickly due to improved technology and the fact that the vaccine was produced at the same time that it was going through the approval process.
- **Why are two shots needed?** Two shots are needed to provide the best protection against COVID-19 for both the Pfizer and Moderna. The first shot makes the immune system recognize the virus, and the second shot strengthens the immune response.
- **How much time between doses?** You should get your second Pfizer shot 21 days after the first and 28 days for Moderna. However, the second dose can be up to six weeks after the first one.
- **Do I have to continue to wear a mask if I've been vaccinated? Yes.** We know that the vaccine keeps you from getting sick with COVID-19, but we don't know yet if the vaccine reduces the spread of the virus. It is important to keep precautions in place until there is less COVID-19 around.
- **Why should I get this vaccine if I am at low-risk of getting very sick from COVID-19?** COVID-19 affects people in different ways, so there is no way of knowing for sure who will get really sick from the virus. The more people who are vaccinated, the less chance the virus has of spreading and getting others sick. Each person vaccinated helps protect those most at risk.
- **Which vaccine should I get?** There are now two vaccines available, and they are both effective at preventing infection. There will be more vaccines coming. I wouldn't be concerned about which vaccine you get. The important thing is to get vaccinated when the vaccine is available to you.

Additional resources:

- CDC toolbox with information on how to communicate about the COVID-19 vaccine with your patients is available in the [Recipient Education](#) portal.
- American Medical Association (AMA) COVID-19 Vaccine Script for Patient Inquiries: <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/2021-01/covid-19-vaccine-patient-inquiry-script.pdf>
- AMA COVID-19 (2019 novel coronavirus) resource center for physicians: <https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/public-health/covid-19-2019-novel-coronavirus-resource-center-physicians>.