

What you should know

COVID-19 has taken its toll, and we know that certain populations have been more severely impacted, including the elderly and those with underlying health conditions like diabetes, heart conditions and obesity. The great news is that the vaccines are highly effective at preventing serious COVID-19 illness at any age and for those with underlying health conditions.

COVID-19 vaccine is available for long-term care residents and their essential family care givers. The vaccine will help us get back to normal life by preventing infections, decreasing outbreaks and lowering your chance of serious illness. If you live in a long-term care facility, or are the representative of someone who does, vaccination is available to you within the facility. Just ask!

The vaccines are approved under an Emergency Use Authorization from the U.S. FDA. It has become available so quickly because it builds on work already completed over the last decade to prevent similar viruses. Every vaccine must pass several tests to make sure it is safe and effective before it is released. The vaccine does not contain any live virus, which means it can't cause COVID-19.

The side effects of vaccination include headache, fever, muscle aches and fatigue. These discomforts are reported to last one to two days and were less likely in older patients participating in the tests.

It typically takes two weeks after vaccination for the body to build protection (immunity) against the virus that causes COVID-19. You are not fully vaccinated until 2 weeks after the second dose of a 2-dose vaccine or two weeks after a single-dose vaccine.

After you are fully vaccinated, you can resume activities that you did before the pandemic.

Getting the COVID-19 vaccine protects you, the ones you live with and the ones you love. Please take this important step toward getting life back to normal.

About the trials

Thousands of people were included in studies of both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, including those ages 65 and older. Researchers determine the safety of the vaccine and how well it works by measuring how the study participants respond. They also watch for side effects. Each vaccine has gone through multiple phases of testing to make sure it is safe and effective. In addition to the CDC and the FDA, the safety of the vaccines will be reviewed by groups of independent doctors and experts.

About the approval process

After all phases of testing are complete, the FDA reviews the research and decides whether to authorize the COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use. The FDA looks at how well the vaccine works, or its effectiveness, and at reported side effects. After the FDA authorizes use of a vaccine, it is made available only to the groups for which it is approved. Researchers, including the CDC, continue to study the vaccine under real-world conditions and continue to check for safety.

Fast Facts

- The vaccine is 94-95% effective in study participants who received the vaccine, including seniors
- People who get COVID-19 after the vaccine have less severe cases
- The vaccine is free
- Pfizer and Moderna are two-part vaccines, so you must get a second dose of the same vaccine to be fully protected. Johnson & Johnson is a single dose.
- Most people are immune to COVID-19 14 days after the final shot
- Find out more at ourshot.in.gov