

ANSWERING YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE COVID-19 VACCINE

Why should I get a COVID vaccine?

Stopping a pandemic requires all of us to do our part. For months, you have helped prevent the spread of COVID-19 by wearing a mask, washing your hands, staying at least six feet from others and remaining home if you are sick. Getting vaccinated is another step you can take to reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus and spreading it to others. Getting vaccinated, along with continuing to follow the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations to protect yourself and others will offer the best protection from COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccination is also an important tool to help us get back to normal. If you contract COVID-19 after getting the vaccine, research shows that the vaccine will help keep you from getting severely ill and needing hospitalization.

I am young, healthy and at low risk from COVID. Should I still get vaccinated?

Yes. The more people who get the vaccine, the closer we can get to reaching herd immunity. Herd immunity is when most people are immune to a disease (meaning they can't get it) because they got a vaccine or they already had the disease and cannot get it again, at least for a while. Herd immunity will slow or stop the spread of disease.

Can a COVID-19 vaccine make me sick with COVID-19?

No. None of the COVID-19 vaccines contain the live virus that causes COVID-19 so a COVID-19 vaccine cannot make you sick with COVID-19.

If I had the virus, do I still need to get the vaccine?

People who had COVID-19 are recommended to get the vaccine after they have recovered. We do not know how long antibodies last after infection and a small number of people have had more severe second bouts of infection. The vaccine trials included people who were previously infected with SARS-CoV-2, and the vaccine was found to be safe.

Can those with suppressed immune systems be vaccinated?

If you are immunosuppressed, you should absolutely get the vaccine so that you have a lower chance of getting severely ill from COVID! You may not have as robust of a response to the vaccine as someone with an intact immune system, but some response is still much better than no response. This includes people on chemotherapy and those that have had bone marrow transplants.

Which vaccine should I get?

At this point, the data between the COVID-19 vaccines look very similar. There are not recommendations for certain populations (e.g., older people or people with immune disorders, etc.) to get one vaccine over the other. Currently, most vaccination sites and health care providers in Minnesota only have one COVID-19 vaccine product, so people will probably not have a choice of which vaccine they get. You can refuse to get vaccinated, but another vaccine appointment cannot be guaranteed right now while vaccine supply remains low.

Can children get the COVID vaccine?

The Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is available to people age 16 and older. The Moderna vaccine is only approved for those age 18 and older. While several companies have begun enrolling younger children in COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials, no vaccine is currently approved for anyone under age 16.

How do we know the COVID-19 vaccines are safe?

COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. COVID-19 vaccines were evaluated in tens of thousands of participants in clinical trials. The vaccines met FDA's rigorous scientific standards for safety, effectiveness, and manufacturing quality needed to support emergency use authorization (EUA). Millions of people in the United States have received COVID-19 vaccines, and these vaccines will undergo the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history. This monitoring includes using both established and new safety monitoring systems to make sure that COVID-19 vaccines are safe.

Do I still need to wear a mask if I received the vaccine?

The vaccines are very effective, but do not provide complete protection. About 1 in 20 people will still be vulnerable to infection even if immunized. There will also be people who do not get the vaccine, and they can still become infected and infect you if you are one of the people who is not protected. It is also still unknown if the vaccines prevent asymptomatic carriage—where people without symptoms carry the virus and infect others.

Can I gather unmasked and indoors with loved ones if I receive the vaccine?

Based on what we know about COVID-19 vaccines, people who have been fully vaccinated can start to do some things that they had stopped doing because of the pandemic. If you've been fully vaccinated (meaning it's been at least two weeks since you've received your final dose of the vaccine):

- You can gather indoors with fully vaccinated people without wearing a mask.
- You can gather indoors with unvaccinated people from one other household (for example, visiting with relatives who all live together) without masks, unless any of those people or anyone they live with has an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- You do not need to stay away from others or get tested if you've been around someone who has COVID-19, unless you have symptoms.

This message is brought to you by the Arrowhead Regional Public Health and Tribal Health Departments, including Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, and St. Louis County Public Health together with the Bois Forte, Fond du Lac, Grand Portage and Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Public Health.



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