



COVID-19 Vaccine FAQs

**Let the truth be told.
Avoiding the COVID-19 vaccine puts everyone at risk.**

“This is becoming a pandemic of the unvaccinated”, as more than **97%** of patients now entering the hospital fall into this category, according to CDC Director Rochelle Walensky.

Please share with those who are hesitant about getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

This information was provided by Sonja Bartolome, M.D. Internist and Pulmonary Disease specialist with UT Southwestern Medical Center.

1. ‘I’m concerned about side effects, particularly long term’

Vaccines are designed to deliver a payload, provoke immunity, and degrade. The messenger RNA (mRNA) in the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines works incredibly fast – it signals cells to make copies of the spike protein and triggers an immune response, and then natural enzymes break down the mRNA within a few days.

Because of this, any side effects from the vaccines usually surface quickly – sore arm, headache, fatigue – and only last a day or two. If there is going to be a serious side effect, it will almost certainly come within two weeks to two months of the rollout of a vaccine, which has proven to be true throughout our long history with vaccinations.

More than 300 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccines have been delivered in the U.S. as of July 17, and the number of serious side effects has been miniscule.

2. ‘The vaccines were rushed and remain authorized only for emergency use’

The COVID-19 vaccines were put through the same rigorous testing that faces any new drug seeking authorization by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The only thing that was accelerated or eliminated were some of the administrative processes – the red tape that can sometimes slow down approvals.

The vaccines were granted “emergency use authorization” because they were developed during a devastating and deadly public health crisis. Full FDA approval, which requires a review of six month’s worth of data, will confirm what we already know: The vaccines are safe and very effective.

3. ‘I never get sick. My immune system will protect me from COVID-19’

SARS-CoV-2 is a novel coronavirus, which means your immune system – no matter how strong – has no existing antibodies to mount a defense against it unless you’ve already had COVID-19. Certainly, immune systems vary based on genetics, age, diet, exercise habits, and even exposure to past pathogens, but COVID-19 has proven itself to be very unpredictable, exacting a toll on people of all ages.

The safest way to strengthen your immune system against a novel coronavirus is to get vaccinated.

4. 'I'm worried the mRNA vaccines will change my DNA'

The mRNA in the vaccines never enters the nucleus of your cells, where DNA lives, so it cannot affect your DNA.

Essentially, mRNA is a technology that the vaccines use to show your immune system the genetic code for the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein, so when your body encounters the virus in real life it recognizes the invader and mounts a defense.

The mRNA does not affect your DNA, and it remains in your body for only a few days.

5. 'The vaccine will affect my fertility'

There is no medical or scientific way for the COVID-19 vaccines to interact with the female reproductive organs. Preliminary research has shown the vaccines are safe for pregnant women and may provide some protective antibodies for their newborns.

As for fertility in men, the vaccines won't cause any adverse effects, but a recently published journal review suggests COVID-19 infection might have a negative impact on testicular function and sperm production.

6. 'The virus and delta variant don't pose a real threat to young people'

False. Data indicate that vaccinated people are largely protected from serious illness from the delta variant, which is considered highly infectious and more transmissible than the original SARS-CoV-2 virus. It also appears to cause more severe disease, particularly in the unvaccinated. The risk of hospitalization increases two-fold if you're infected with the delta variant.

While deaths from COVID-19 are rare among young people, they are susceptible to "long-haul COVID" complications such as respiratory problems, loss of smell, and brain fog. Although we are still studying these long-term symptoms, we know getting vaccinated will prevent these health effects.

7. 'I've had COVID-19, so I have natural immunity and don't need a vaccine'

There have been reported cases of people who have had COVID-19 and been reinfected, so experts recommend vaccination, particularly for added protection against variants.

8. 'I don't want to be a guinea pig'

Frontline workers were among the first people to get vaccinated in December 2020, and since then more than 1 billion people worldwide have gotten their shots. This is not an experiment, it is an unprecedented scientific "win" that we learned how to prevent a terrible disease just months after its discovery. Vaccines, and these in particular, are the best medicine has to offer – disease prevention.

Avoiding a COVID-19 vaccine is not just a choice that affects you – it puts everyone (friends, family, neighbors, co-workers) at risk. The proof is overwhelming that these vaccines are safe and effective. They are also the fastest way to finally put an end to this pandemic and to continue traveling, meeting with friends, enjoying sports and living a full, healthy life.



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