"GETTING MY COVID-19 VACCINE MEANS I CAN GET BACK TO MY FAVORITE ACTIVITIES."

I GOT MY COVID-19 VACCINE!

Answering Questions About the COVID-19 Vaccine for Older Children and Teens

SEE FAQS ›

Help Us Stop the Spread of COVID-19

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Help Us Stop the Spread of COVID-19

How does the Pfizer vaccine work?

Pfizer's mRNA COVID-19 vaccine provides instructions to our cells to create a protein found on the COVID-19 virus. It does not cause our cells to generate the virus itself. Once our cells display this protein, our immune system begins to build a defense against this protein. Then, the next time a vaccinated person is exposed to the COVID-19 virus, the immune system recognizes the protein and can work to fight off the infection quickly and prevent serious disease.

Currently, in the U.S., Pfizer's vaccine is the only approved vaccine available for adolescents ages 12 to 17.

Pfizer's vaccine requires two doses given 21 days, or 3 weeks apart. The booster must be from the same vaccine manufacturer as the initial injection. You are considered immune two weeks after your second dose of the vaccine.

Is the vaccine safe? Will it change my DNA? Can it cause COVID-19 infection?

Yes, all available vaccines are safe. The vaccine does not contain any live virus particles, so you cannot get the infection from it. None of the vaccines interact with or change a person's DNA. The particles injected into a person's body are designed to break down quickly and be eliminated by the body, so they do not stay and become replicated. mRNA vaccine technology is not new and has been in the making for the past 30 years. View this link about the history of mRNA vaccines.

Recently, there have been reports of myocarditis (inflammation of the heart) with the COVID-19 vaccine in adolescents. Studies are being performed and currently show the incidence rate (the number of people affected) is about 1 in 50,000 vaccinated adolescents. Myocarditis is most common in boys and young men, typically after the second booster vaccine. So far, all adolescents have recovered without complication. Myocarditis symptoms may include chest pain or pressure, palpitations, shortness of breath, and difficulty breathing when lying down or exercising.

Importantly, myocarditis commonly occurs with a COVID-19 infection and multisystem inflammatory syndrome of children, or MIS-C, a complication associated with COVID-19. The CDC is carefully monitoring these developments but, along with the American Heart Association, continues to strongly recommended the COVID-19 for individuals in the age group.

What are the side effects of the vaccine?

Some people may have a local reaction with swelling and tenderness at the injection site. You may have sore muscles and feel tired. You also could have sore muscles and feel tired. Headaches, diarrhea, mild fever or chills are also other side effects after receiving the vaccine. These side effects might feel like you were sick; however, these reactions mean the vaccine is working. The vaccine is teaching your body how to fight COVID-19 if you are exposed. It does not mean you have the infection. For most people, these side effects will last no longer than one to two days.

Can my child receive his routine vaccines at the same time frame as the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the CDC have stated it's safe to get other routine vaccines before or after the COVID-19 vaccine without any delay.

I am concerned about the speed with which these vaccines were developed.

The world developed COVID-19 vaccines so quickly because of years of previous research on COVID-19-related viruses. Technologies have allowed us faster ways to manufacture vaccines and significant government funding also supported multiple vaccine trials at a time, further allowing regulators to move quicker. None of these have compromised the safety of the vaccine itself. The FDA's Emergency Use Authorization still requires rigorous standards and does not mean a vaccine is unsafe.

If you have allergies to medications or foods, should you get the vaccine?

If you have had a previous severe allergic reaction to a COVID-19 vaccine or any vaccine components, you should not receive the vaccine. The vaccines do not use eggs, latex or preservatives. You can receive the COVID-19 vaccine even if you have allergies to any medication except polyethylene glycol (PEG), the key ingredient in the laxative MiraLAX®.

What is the big deal about getting the COVID-19 infection? Isn't it just like the flu? Why do I need the vaccine?

COVID-19 can have potentially serious, life-threatening complications. There is no way to know how it will affect you. Complications may include respiratory failure, strokes, blood clots, other long-term symptoms and even death. In children and adolescents, MIS-C also is a risk associated with a COVID-19 infection. Over 500,000 people have already died from COVID-19 in the U.S. alone. If you get sick, you can quickly spread the disease to friends, family, and others around you, causing significant risk to your loved ones.

Can the vaccine interfere with puberty or fertility?

No. The vaccine site where the mRNA is injected activates the immune cells; these then travel to other areas of the body through the lymphatic system. The vaccine does not interact with the body's DNA, nor does it affect hormone levels.

Am I able to get the vaccine if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?

Yes, currently pregnant or breastfeeding young women may receive the COVID-19 vaccine. There is no data to indicate the vaccine causes any problems with pregnancy or is passed along to a breastfed baby.

Should I get vaccinated if I have had the COVID-19 infection already?

Yes, you should still be vaccinated because you can become infected again. Although you may have some short-term natural protection (known as immunity) after recovering from COVID-19, we do not know how long this protection will last. Vaccination is the best protection, and it is safe even if you have had the infection. If you are currently infected with COVID-19, you will need to quarantine for 10 days before receiving the vaccine.

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