



Answering Your Questions About the New COVID-19 Vaccines

COVID -19 Vaccines

Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccination

Healthcare workers at Upper Allegheny are being offered the COVID-19 vaccine. As more vaccine becomes available, more groups of individuals will be eligible to be vaccinated. This fact sheet will provide some basic information to help you better understand the COVID-19 vaccine. If you have other questions please feel free to contact Infection Prevention or Employee Health.

- **Why should I get the vaccine?**
 - You are on the front lines and risk being exposed to people with COVID-19. If you are protected, it also protects your patients, family and especially those who may be at higher risk from COVID-19. You play an essential role in keeping your community health.
- **Is the vaccine safe?**
 - The United States vaccine safety system ensures that all vaccines are as safe as possible. All vaccines are developed according to rigorous standards set forth by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). If the FDA determines that a vaccine meets its safety and effectiveness standards, it can make these vaccines available by approval or emergency use authorization. The COVID-19 vaccine has been rigorously tested in large clinical trials with people of different ages, races, and ethnicities as well as those with different medical conditions and has been determined to be safe and effective.
- **Are you sure it's safe? Wasn't it "rushed" through?**
 - Vaccine development for coronavirus infection began in 2002 with the SARS outbreak, so this is not a new development. Once the genetic sequence of the virus was determined, the current technologies allowed for rapid development and testing. The vaccines do not have full FDA approval, but have been approved under the emergency use authorization. The science and safety aspects are not "rushed." The safety profiles of these vaccines are better than, or at least equal to many vaccines, that have been on the market for years.
- **What is Emergency Use Authorization (EUA)?**
 - Is a process that allows the approval and use of medical countermeasures, including vaccines, during public health emergencies such as the current COVID-19 pandemic. Under a EUA the FDA may allow the use of unapproved medical products to diagnose, treat or prevent a serious life-threatening disease when certain criteria have been met.
- **But there are no long term studies on this vaccine, so how can I be sure it is safe?**
 - Unfortunately there are no guarantees when it comes to vaccines, medications or medical procedures. We rely upon the best data available to make informed decisions. There is no long term data available, but there are data available on the risks of COVID-19.
- **Who should not get the Vaccine?**
 - You should NOT get the vaccine if:
 - You have a history of a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to any component of the vaccine.
 - You are currently having symptoms of COVID-19
 - Immunocompromised persons, including individuals receiving immunosuppressant therapy, may have a diminished immune response, but may still be vaccinated.

- **What are the Side Effects / Risks of the Vaccine? How to I report a problem or bad reaction after getting a COVID-19 vaccine?**

- All health care workers who received the vaccine will be monitored for at least 15 minutes after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

Side Effects	Rare Side Effects (usually occurring within a few minutes to one hour)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Injection site pain, swelling, redness • Tiredness • Headache • Muscle pain • Chills • Joint pain • Fever • Nausea • Feeling unwell • Swollen lymph nodes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty breathing • Swelling of your face and throat • Fast heart rate • Rash / Hives • Dizziness & Weakness <p>If you experience any of these severe side effects seek medical attention</p>

- **Will the COVID-19 vaccine give me COVID-19?**

- No, the vaccines do not contain SARS-CoV-2 and cannot give you COVID-19. However, it does take time for the vaccine to be effective and if you are exposed to the virus you can still get it. Continue to wear a mask, wash your hands and don't touch your face.

- **Will the COVID-19 vaccine affect my genetic make-up?**

- No, the mRNA vaccines are not live virus vaccines, nor do they use an adjuvant to enhance vaccine efficacy. These vaccines do not enter the nucleus and do not alter human DNA in vaccine recipients. As a result, mRNA vaccines cannot cause any genetic changes.

- **What if I already had COVID-19?**

- The fact that re-infection of COVID-19 is possible people who have had COVID-19 should still be vaccinated after the acute infection has resolved. Generally speaking, the vaccine can be administered 14 days after infection, but up to 90 days after. Data suggests that protective antibodies persist for at least 90 days after infection.

- **What if I am pregnant, breast feeding, or considering pregnancy?**

- The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommends that COVID-19 vaccines should not be withheld from pregnant individuals who meet criteria for vaccination based on ACIP (Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices) recommended priority groups, which includes health care personnel. COVID-19 vaccines should be offered to lactating individuals similar to non-lactating individuals in the priority groups. While a conversation with a clinician may be helpful, it should not be required prior to vaccination, as this may cause unnecessary barriers to access. Additionally, the vaccine does not cause infertility as reported on social media.
- Available data suggest that symptomatic pregnant patients with COVID-19 are at increased risk of more severe illness compared with nonpregnant peers.

- ***Do I still need to wear a mask if I get the vaccine?***
 - Yes, the CDC recommends that during the pandemic people wear masks that cover their nose and mouth when in contact with others outside your household, when in health care facilities and when receiving the vaccine. There is still a lot more to learn and understand about the protection that the COVID-19 vaccines provide. Other factors, including how many people get vaccinated and how the virus is spreading in the community will also affect this decision.
- ***What vaccines are available to help prevent me from getting COVID-19?***
 - Currently the FDA has granted emergency use authorization to the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine and the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. Other vaccines are in the process of obtaining FDA approval and will soon be available.
- ***Who is paying for the vaccine?***
 - The vaccine will be provided at no charge to health care workers at Upper Alleghany Health System.

References:

Centers for Disease Control

Food and Drug Administration

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG)

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)