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Questions and Answers from “COVID-19 Vaccines: What You Need to Know Now”
Community Forum
Feb 23, 2021

1. If I have had COVID-19, when it is advisable to get the vaccine?

Answer: You should be vaccinated regardless of whether you already had COVID-19. That’s because experts do not yet know how long you are protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. Even if you have already recovered from COVID-19, it is possible—although rare—that you could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 again.

If you were treated for COVID-19 with monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma, you should wait 90 days before getting a COVID-19 vaccine. Talk to your doctor if you are unsure what treatments you received or if you have more questions about getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

2. When can children get the vaccine?

Answer: Since children have a different immune system from adults, additional studies need to be completed before we have a clear answer. Children under age 12 will "very likely" be able to get vaccinated for coronavirus at the "earliest the end of the year, and very likely the first quarter of 2022," according to NIAID Director Anthony Fauci.

3. Have all the vaccines been approved by FDA? What are the health risks?

Answer: Vaccines for COVID-19 will start out being used under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) by the FDA. An EUA makes the vaccine available for public health emergencies. It means that the vaccine is available outside of a research study but is not yet approved. This is the usual first step for a new vaccine. The vaccine can continue to be used as long as people benefit from it. The research continues as it moves toward full approval.

After getting vaccinated, you may have some side effects, which are normal signs that your body is building protection. The most common side effects are pain and swelling in the arm where you received the shot. In addition, you may have fever, chills, tiredness, and headache which may last 24-72 hour.



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4. If 80% of the county is vaccinated, can the community walk in the community without wearing masks'?

Answer: The safest thing to do is wear a mask. All over the world countries do this to prevent unnecessary infections outside of just COVID-19 and was one of the reasons some countries were able to slow the curve easier. In theory, everyone could stop wearing masks when 80% to 90% of the population of the United States has been immunized but for now, the safest thing to do is wear a mask.

5. Is it a guarantee that the vaccines will safely secure you from getting the virus?

Answer: Not 100%. All COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States have been shown to be highly effective at preventing COVID-19. Based on evidence from clinical trials the mRNA vaccines were 94-95% effective at preventing laboratory confirmed COVID-19 illness. Based on what we know about vaccines for other diseases and early data from clinical trials, experts believe that getting a COVID-19 vaccine may also help keep you from getting seriously ill and help to reduce the potential death rate. Experts continue to conduct more studies about the effect of COVID-19 vaccination on severity of illness from COVID-19, as well as its ability to keep people from spreading the virus that causes COVID-19.

6. If you are having side effects from the vaccine such as muscle pain, fever or headache, can you take some painkillers? Does this take away the effectiveness of the vaccine?

Answer: You can take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or NSAIDs like ibuprofen if you have these side effects from the vaccines after you have been vaccinated.

There is no evidence that taking Tylenol or ibuprofen after vaccination will decrease the effectiveness of the vaccines for COVID-19. While some studies do show that taking it before may cause some effects on [vaccinations](#).

7. Is it safe to get the vaccine if I have food allergies? Or if I am allergic to penicillin?

Answer: People with common allergies to medications, foods, inhalants, insects, and latex are probably no more likely than the general public to have an allergic reaction to the mRNA COVID-19 vaccines. Those patients should be informed of the benefits of the vaccine versus its risks.



8. After I get my vaccine do I still have to get checked for COVID? If so, how often?

Answer: Not necessarily. Fully vaccinated persons should still watch for [symptoms of COVID-19](#) for 10 days following an exposure. If they experience symptoms, they should be clinically evaluated for COVID-19 and be tested.

9. How safe is the vaccine for people who are breastfeeding process? Would this affect the baby?

Answer: There are no data on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in lactating women or on the effects of mRNA vaccines on the breastfed infant or on milk production/excretion. mRNA vaccines are not thought to be a risk to the breastfeeding infant.

10. For construction workers and others that work with the public, when would the vaccines be available?

Answer: Currently the state is vaccinating healthcare workers, long-term care residents, agriculture and food workers, education and childcare workers, and emergency services. Please find out more about who is eligible to be vaccinated at <https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines>.

You can find out if you're eligible and if vaccine appointments are available at <https://myturn.ca.gov>. If it's not your turn yet or appointments are not available, you can register to be notified when you're eligible or when appointments open up.

11. Can employer require employees to get the vaccine?

Employers may mandate employees to be vaccinated in order to perform work. Employees always have a choice to remain employees. EEOC and CDC have been clear that employers may require vaccinations under a direct threat exemption currently required under COVID-19. Special accommodations requests and process must be allowed for religious or medical reasons.

12. Can an employee refuse to go back to work until the employee gets vaccinated?

Absent a collective bargaining agreement or special protections, many companies are at-will employers. You should refer to your personnel policies and HR department to understand your full rights and responsibilities. Employees may be eligible for protected leave due to medical exclusion or for other instances. However, employers may deny your special accommodation request.



13. Is there a plan to get a mobile unit out to people that work in the field?

At this time there is no mobile units planned. The County of Santa Cruz just purchased a mobile clinic which they hope to retrofit for this purpose but we don't have a timeline for implementation.

14. Is the vaccine for food workers available for every age group?

Yes, under the current guidelines all food service workers are eligible based on availability of vaccines.

15. When will life return to normal?

Answer: The more people who get vaccinated, the closer we get to herd immunity of 80-90%, the sooner life will get back to a new "normal". Masking and other social distancing practices will likely remain due to variants and desire to keep our communities safe.

16. How frequently are people who receive the vaccine going to need booster vaccines?

We do not yet know if boosters will be needed or how often. This is something researchers are currently studying and more information is anticipated to come.

17. How long does the vaccination last?

Initial evidence shows that this vaccine may be good for a long time, from a couple of years to ten years, or maybe even for life. This is something researchers are currently studying and more information is anticipated to come.

18. When the vaccine supply increases within the county, will we be able to choose which vaccine we'd prefer?

Maybe later, when we have lots of vaccine. The difference in effectiveness is not significant and you are at risk while you wait. Santa Cruz Public Health Department advises getting whichever vaccine is available to you first and there will be a more abundance of available vaccines once Johnson and Johnson arrive.

19. What is the county doing to stop people from other places (like Los Angeles) coming to Santa Cruz vaccination sites and taking slots away from the residents here?

People getting vaccinated here must either live or work here in the County. Through the various enrollments process that the County has they are working diligently to ensure this is minimized. An exception is for Sutter/PAMF and Kaiser, whose patients can go anywhere in the system where they can get an appointment.