The following information was taken from the CDC website 12/15/2020. The information is likely to change over the coming weeks and months.

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Understanding How COVID-19 Vaccines Work

To fight an infection from coronavirus, our bodies must develop germ-fighting cells. The first time a person is infected with the virus, it can take several days or weeks for our body to make and use all the germ fighting tools needed to get over the infection. After the infection, our immune system remembers what it learned regarding how to protect the body against the virus. So, if the body detects the same virus again, it can begin producing antibodies to attack the virus.

The vaccines for COVID – 19 help our bodies develop immunity to the virus without us having to get the illness. Different vaccines work in different ways, but with all types of vaccines, the body is left with a supply of cells that will remember how to fight the virus in the future.

It typically takes a few weeks for the body to produce these cells after vaccination, and the body does not develop its highest resistance to the virus until weeks after the second shot. Therefore, it is possible that a person could be infected with the virus that causes COVID – 19, just before or just after vaccination, and then get sick because the vaccine did not have enough time to provide protection.

Sometimes after vaccination, the process of building immunity can cause symptoms. These symptoms are a sign the body is building immunity.

Types of Vaccines

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Currently there are 3 types of vaccines. None of them can give a person COVID - 19. Two vaccines use 2 shots. The first shot starts building protection. A second shot, a few weeks later, is needed to get the most protection the vaccine has to offer. One vaccine under trial needs one shot.

When the Vaccine Supply is Limited, Who Are the First to Be Vaccinated?

The CDC recommends that healthcare personnel and longterm care facility (LTCF) residents are the first to receive the vaccines. This decision was based on recommendations by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), an independent panel of medical and public health experts, who review all the available clinical trial information and identified the ethical principles to guide their decision making process. The CDC recommendations are that:



• Healthcare personnel include all paid and unpaid people who serve in healthcare settings and have potential for direct or indirect exposure to patients or infectious materials (including emergency medical personnel, pharmacists, laundry personnel, dietary personnel, administrative staff and others).

This Compliance Bulletin is not intended to be exhaustive nor should any discussion or opinions be construed as legal advice. Readers should contact legal counsel for legal advice.



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• Residents of LTCF are defined as adults who live in facilities that provide a variety of services, including medical and personal care to people who are unable to live independently.

As vaccine availability increases, vaccination recommendations will expand to include more groups.

When You Get Vaccinated



You should receive a printed or electronic fact sheet that tells you more about the specific vaccine you are offered. Each vaccine has its own fact sheet to help you understand the risks and benefits of the vaccine.

After being vaccinated, you may be asked to wait nearby for a few minutes for observation purposes. You should receive a vaccination card or printout that tells you what COVID – 19 vaccine you received, the date you received it and where you received it.

After Vaccination

With most COVID - 19 vaccines you will need two shots for them to work. Get the second shot even if you have side effects after the first one unless a vaccination provider or your doctor tells you not to get the second shot.

Ask your healthcare provider about getting started with v-safe, a free smartphone-based tool that uses text messaging and web surveys to provide personalized health check-ins after you receive a COVID – 19 vaccination. V-safe also reminds you to get your second dose if you need one.

It takes time for your body to build protection after any vaccination. COVID - 19 vaccines that require 2 shots may not protect you until a week or two after your second shot. It is important that you continue to wear a face covering over your mouth and nose, wash hands often and distance from others.

Common side effects of a vaccine

For a few days you may experience pain and swelling where the shot was given. Throughout the rest of your body: fever, chills, tiredness, and headache. If you have pain or discomfort, talk to your doctor about taking an over-the-counter medicine, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen. To reduce pain and discomfort where you got the shot: apply a clean, cool, wet washcloth over the area, and use or exercise your arm. To reduce discomfort from fever, drink plenty of fluids and dress lightly. Remember, side effects may feel like flu and even affect your ability to do daily activities, but they should go away in a few days.



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Who Should Contact Their Doctor Before Taking the Vaccine?

If you are in one of the following groups, ask your doctor if the vaccine is recommended.

- Under 16 years of age
- People with a history of vaccine allergies. People with food allergies have received the vaccine with no issue.
- Pregnant and lactating women
- People with underlying medical conditions
- People who have a suppressed immune system.
- People who currently have COVID 19

The Bottom Line

Getting vaccinated is one of the many steps you can take to protect yourself and others from COVID – 19. Vaccines work with your immune system so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. Other steps like masks and social distancing help reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus or spreading it to others even after you have been vaccinated.



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