



COVID-19 Vaccine Overview and FAQs

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Quick Facts

- COVID-19 vaccines are mRNA vaccines that do not include viral particles or inactivated virus and cannot give us COVID.
- The mRNA from the vaccines is quickly degraded and does not come in contact with or interact with our DNA. They cannot alter our DNA.
- The vaccines are highly effective with an efficacy rate of 94-95%.
- The most common side effects include headaches, body aches, chills, fevers and diarrhea and typically last 1-2 days. They are more common than in many other vaccines such as the flu vaccine. However, these side effects appear to last for a short time only. Most serious side effects of any vaccine are evident by 6 weeks, and based on COVID-19 vaccine trials, we have a good idea of what side effects to expect with these vaccines.

Key Points Regarding COVID-19

- The prevalence of COVID-19 is very high. Given the prevalence in Idaho at this time, if you do not get a vaccine you have a high likelihood of getting COVID-19 at some point.
- COVID-19 is not a benign disease. There have been more than 300,000 deaths in the US alone and currently there are approximately 3,000 deaths per day in the US secondary to COVID. This does not include the larger number of patients who survive COVID but suffer a long lasting or permanent complications, which may include any of the following: vascular events, cardiac damage, lung damage, kidney injury, cognitive/memory impairment, depression/anxiety/mood changes and others.
- We now know patients can get COVID more than once, and sometimes the second infection is quite severe.

FAQs

Q. Why should I get vaccinated?

- We recommend COVID-19 vaccine to our patients because of the serious burden of disease in our country.
- COVID-19 is causing an unprecedented death toll in our country. More than 300,000 Americans have died and the CDC director warns we could have more than 3,000 additional deaths per day, every day, through the winter months.
- People of all ages have suffered serious illness and death as a result of COVID-19 infection. It is difficult to predict how a patient may react to becoming infected.

Q. What kind of vaccine is a COVID-19 vaccine?

- These types of vaccines are mRNA vaccines.
- These vaccines cannot give you coronavirus because they do not contain live virus.
- They induce your immune system to recognize a small part of the virus that does not itself give you the disease. Once your system is "primed" with the vaccine, your body will be ready to fight the actual virus once you are exposed.

- Importantly, the mRNA used is not incorporated into your DNA since it is short-lived and does not enter the DNA portion of the cell.

Q. I heard this vaccine is too new to trust.

- mRNA vaccines are new to us, but they have been in development for decades.
- Enormous resources have been put into vaccine development by Operation Warp Speed, allowing relatively quick development this year.
- The FDA did not skip any steps in the development or approval of this vaccine.

Q. Does this vaccine work, and is it safe?

- The FDA and CDC have reviewed the safety and efficacy data from the biotech companies and only authorize a vaccine if it is safe.
- These mRNA vaccines show 94-95% efficacy which is well above the FDA's goal for an adequate COVID vaccine to be at least 50% efficacious.
- Data from both trials show that these vaccines are safe with only mild side effects in a small percentage of patients, like injection site reactions, fatigue, body aches, headaches, chills and diarrhea. The mild side effects have been shown to last about 1 day. (These are common with any vaccine, like the flu vaccine.)

Q. Should I get the vaccine if I already had COVID-19?

- Yes. The CDC is advising everyone get the vaccine, no matter if you have had the disease or not. This is because the vaccine offers better, longer-lasting protection than natural infection.

Q. Will I still have to wear a mask and social distance after I get the vaccine?

- Yes. We follow health department guidelines on this issue. Until a certain percentage of the population has been vaccinated, we all need to continue to wear masks and social distance to slow down the spread.

Q. Who is approved to get this vaccine?

- Anyone over age 16 in the US will eventually be able to get vaccinated.
- There are some special populations who should talk to their doctor first before getting this vaccine, like pregnant or breastfeeding women, and those who are immunocompromised.
- If you are allergic to any parts of the vaccine, you should not get it.
- If you have a history of serious allergic reactions in general, you can still get the vaccine and will be observed closely for side effects by medical staff.

Q. Who will get the vaccine first?

- Both federal and state guidelines have outlined a roll-out of this vaccine, allowing health care workers and residents/staff of long-term care facilities to be in the first vaccination group. We expect to start vaccinating this group in late December 2020.

Q. When can I get the vaccine if I'm not in the first group?

- We do not have complete details yet on when vaccine will be available for the general population. There is an uncertain supply of vaccine, especially in the first weeks of distribution.
- Primary Health staff are working with guidelines given to us by the state of Idaho to prioritize our patients who are most at-risk from severe coronavirus disease.
We will reach out to our patients directly when they can begin to schedule vaccination appointments.