Covid-19: Vaccines and Prevention

The best prevention is to have no contact with the SARS-CoV-2 virus, to follow safety precautions, and to get vaccinated. The FDA has approved several vaccines to prevent COVID-19. One vaccine has been approved for people as young as 12. Vaccines are available to prevent COVID-19 and reduce the severity of illness if you get the virus. No vaccine is ever 100% effective in preventing any illness, but the COVID-19 vaccines work well and are safe. Talk with your healthcare provider about your risks and which vaccine may be best for you and your family.

Expert groups, including ACOG and CDC, advise pregnant or breastfeeding people to be vaccinated.

The vaccines are given as a shot (injection) in the arm muscle. There are 2 COVID-19 vaccine choices:

- 1-dose vaccine (Johnson & Johnson)
- 2-dose vaccine (either Pfizer or Moderna). If you get the 2-dose vaccine, the second dose is given several weeks after the first.

Normally healthy people are considered fully vaccinated 2 weeks after getting the 1-dose or the last shot of the 2-dose vaccine.

Who needs a 3-dose primary series?

- People with a very weak immune system may not build up enough antibodies to fight COVID-19 after getting the first 2 doses of the 2-dose vaccine. This includes people who have had a solid organ transplant or who have a condition such as cancer or HIV that causes a very weak immune system. For these people, an extra dose of the 2-dose vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) is advised. It's considered part of their vaccine series (primary series), not a booster. The extra shot is given at least 28 days after the second dose. Talk with your healthcare provider about your case and risk.

Pfizer booster

The FDA has authorized a **booster** dose of the Pfizer vaccine to be given at least 6 months after the last shot of the primary series for certain high-risk people. CDC states these people **should** get a Pfizer booster:

- People age 65 or older

- People living in long-term care facilities
- People ages 50 to 64 years with certain health conditions that put them at high risk for severe COVID-19.

Other adults older than 18 **may choose** to get the booster based on their risk. This includes people with health conditions that put them at high risk for severe COVID-19 or who are at risk for exposure to COVID-19 in their work setting, such as essential workers. Talk with your healthcare provider if you have questions. The FDA is exploring booster doses of the other types of COVID-19 vaccines. No final recommendation has been made.

Take precautions: Travel and other outings

Stay informed about COVID-19 in your area. Follow local instructions about being in public. Be aware of events in your community that may be postponed or canceled, such as school and sporting events. You may be advised not to attend public gatherings.

Follow safety precautions in your community. You may be advised to stay at least 6 feet from others as much as possible. This is called "social distancing." You may be advised to wear a mask. You may also be advised to stay at home and isolate yourself as much as possible. You may hear terms such as "self isolate, "quarantine," "stay at home," and "shelter in place."
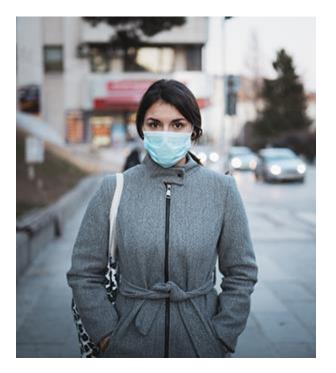
CDC recommends not traveling until you are **fully vaccinated** against COVID-19. This is because travel raises your chance of getting and spreading the infection. You are considered fully vaccinated 2 weeks after getting either the 1-dose or the last dose of the 2-dose vaccine. Be aware of travel precautions, both within the U.S. and abroad. When traveling in the U.S., be aware of mask requirements on public transportation such as airplanes, subways, and trains. Here are the most current [CDC travel guidelines](#) .

When you are at home

- Wash your hands often. Use soap and clean, running water for at least 20 seconds.
- If you don't have access to soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer often. Make sure it has at least 60% alcohol.
- Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth unless you have clean hands.
- Don't kiss someone who is sick.
- If you need to cough or sneeze, do it into a tissue. Then throw the tissue into the trash. If you don't have tissues, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow.
- When possible, don't touch "high-touch" shared surfaces such as doorknobs and handles, cabinet handles, and light switches.
- Clean frequently-touched home surfaces often with disinfectant. This includes desk surfaces, printers, phones, kitchen counters, tables, fridge door handle, bathroom surfaces, and any soiled surface. Closely follow disinfectant label instructions. You can find them at [CDC's detailed cleaning website](#).
- Check your home supplies. Consider keeping a 2-week supply of medicines, food, and other needed household items.

- Make a plan for childcare, work, and ways to stay in touch with others. Know who will help you if you get sick.
- Don't be around people who are sick.
- There is no evidence right now that animals spread SARS-CoV-2. But it's always a good idea to wash your hands after touching any animals. Don't touch animals that may be sick.
- Don't share eating or drinking utensils with sick people.

If you leave home

- Stay informed about all safety instructions in your area.
- Stag at least 6 feet away from all people as advised. This is called "social distancing."
- When possible, don't touch "high-touch" public surfaces such as doorknobs and handles, cabinet handles, and light switches. If you touch these surfaces, try to clean them first with a disinfecting wipe. Or touch them using a tissue or paper towel.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer often. Make sure it has at least 60% alcohol.
- Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth unless you have clean hands.
- If you need to cough or sneeze, do it into a tissue. Then throw the tissue into the trash. If you don't have tissues, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow.
- As advised, wear a cloth face mask with two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric and a nose wire. Or you can wear a disposable paper mask with a cloth mask over it. Wear the mask so that it covers both your nose and mouth. See [CDC's guide to masks](#).
  - CDC advises all people older than 2 who are not fully vaccinated to wear a mask and stay 6 feet away from others while in public.
  - CDC recommends indoor masking for **all** teachers, staff, students, and visitors to schools, regardless of vaccination status.

- CDC advises people with weak immune systems, even if fully vaccinated, to continue wearing masks and to stay 6 feet away from others while in public.
  - Like other viruses, the virus that causes COVID-19 changes (mutates) all the time. This leads to several variants that are easily spread, including the delta variant. To protect against variants, CDC advises all people over age 2, including those who are fully vaccinated, to wear a mask indoors in public settings if you are in an area of high numbers of COVID-19 cases. See [CDC's county data website](#) for current transmission information in your area.
- Regardless of vaccination status, certain people should not wear a face mask. This includes:
  - Children younger than 2 years old
  - Anyone with a health, developmental, or mental health condition that can be made worse by wearing a mask
  - Anyone who is unconscious or unable to remove the face covering without help.

If you are at a work site

- **If you haven't been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and are exposed, go home and stay home if you feel sick in any way.**
- Tell your supervisor if you are well but live with someone who has COVID-19.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from all people.
- Don't shake hands with anyone.
- Don't attend in-person meetings, or limit how many you attend. Meet over phone or video if possible.
- Don't use other people's desks, phones, equipment, or offices, if possible.
- Wash your hands often. Use soap and clean, running water for at least 20 seconds.
- If you don't have access to soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer often. Make sure it has at least 60% alcohol.
- Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth unless you have clean hands.
- Wear a face mask as advised by your employer, CDC guidance, and your community's instructions.
- When possible, don't touch "high-touch" public surfaces such as doorknobs and handles, cabinet handles, and light switches. If you touch these surfaces, clean them first with a disinfecting wipe. Or touch them using a tissue or paper towel.
- Use office kitchens one person at a time.
- Consider not having office coffee or tea, or group foods.
- Don't have meals in groups.
- Clean work surfaces often with disinfectant. This includes desk surfaces, photocopier, printer, phones, kitchen counters, fridge door handle, bathroom surfaces, and others.
- Don't touch other people's personal work tools, such as phones, keyboards, pens, and other items.
- Don't touch other people's eating or drinking utensils.
- If you need to cough or sneeze, do it into a tissue. Then throw the tissue into the trash. If you don't have tissues, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow.

If you have been exposed to a person with COVID-19

If you've been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, you don't need to stay home if you've been exposed **and don't have symptoms**. If you have been exposed and have symptoms, stay home and contact your provider about COVID-19 testing.

If you are not fully vaccinated and have been exposed to someone who is suspected of having COVID-19 or has tested positive for it:

- Call your healthcare provider and follow all instructions. Stay home away from others and monitor your health. This is called quarantine. CDC advises that you quarantine to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 once you've been exposed to someone with the infection. CDC still supports quarantine for 14 days after exposure, but they recognize the hardship for many who need to work. CDC now recommends two options for how long quarantine should last. **If you have been exposed but don't have symptoms, you can stop quarantine:**
  - 10 days after exposure if you don't get a diagnostic (viral) test, or
  - 7 days after getting a negative viral test result.
- Take your temperature every morning and evening for 14 days after exposure. This is to check for fever. Keep a record of the readings. If possible, stay away from others, especially those who are at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19.
- Watch for symptoms of the virus such as cough or trouble breathing. If you develop any symptoms, isolate yourself right away. Call your provider first before going to any clinic or hospital. See [CDC's coronavirus self-checker](#).
- Your limits are different if you've had COVID-19 in the last 3 months but are fully recovered without symptoms and you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19. If you are symptom-free, you don't need to quarantine or be retested. CDC doesn't recommend retesting unless you have symptoms of COVID-19 and your new symptoms can't be linked to another illness. Contact your healthcare provider if you have any questions. If you develop symptoms, stay home. If you had COVID-19 more than 3 months ago and have been exposed again, treat it like you've never had COVID-19 and stay home, limit your contact with others, call your provider, and monitor for symptoms.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider if you think you have COVID-19 symptoms. These can include fever, cough, and trouble breathing. They may also include body aches, headache, chills or repeated shaking with chills, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, or diarrhea. Follow your healthcare provider's specific instructions.

Do I still need a flu shot?

During a pandemic, it's especially important to keep up on recommended vaccines for other illnesses. This is more true if you're at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, the flu, or pneumonia. This includes older adults and those who have long-term (chronic) health conditions.

Getting a yearly flu vaccine is advised for everyone 6 months old and older, with rare exceptions. Health experts advise the flu vaccine to protect you and others. The flu vaccine helps protect those at high-risk for serious illness, and lowers the strain on hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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