Indiana Department of Health

Is the vaccine safe? Why should I get it?
Being immunized against COVID-19 can prevent you from getting the virus and protect others around you. COVID-19 vaccines also help keep you from getting seriously ill even if you do get COVID-19. The side effects of the vaccine are generally mild, including fatigue, headache and sometimes fever for a day or two.

While the COVID-19 vaccine is new, the science used to create it is not. The COVID-19 vaccine has been thoroughly tested in laboratory and clinical settings to make sure it is safe and effective. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved all the vaccines under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA), meaning the vaccine must be proven safe and effective in the same way that all medications and devices must be. Since the vaccines were approved, millions of people in the United States have received COVID-19 vaccines under the most intense safety monitoring in U.S. history. In late August, Pfizer became the first COVID-19 vaccine to receive full approval from the FDA for those 16 and older. Scientists will continue to study the effects of the vaccine for the next few years.

How much does the vaccine cost?
The vaccine will be free, but if you have insurance, the company may be charged an administration fee for the first dose and a smaller fee for the second dose. Please bring your insurance card to your appointment.

Who can get vaccinated?
You can get vaccinated if you are age 12 or older. If you are younger than 18, you must receive the Pfizer vaccine. It is the only vaccine to receive an EUA from the FDA for ages 12 to 15, and full authorization for 16 and older. Moderna and Johnson & Johnson are also available for ages 18 and older.

How does the vaccine work?
There are three COVID-19 vaccines that are available in the United States: Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson/Janssen. Each type of vaccine prompts our bodies to recognize and protect us from the virus that causes COVID-19. None of these vaccines can give you COVID-19.

The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines contain a very small piece of messenger RNA (mRNA), a type of material that gives your body instructions for making a protein from the COVID-19 virus. Once this protein is made, it triggers your body to make antibodies to fight it. If you are exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19, you will already have antibodies to fight the virus. The mRNA never enters the nucleus of our body cells, which is where our DNA (genetic material) is found.

The Johnson & Johnson/Janssen is a single-dose vaccine. It's different than the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine because it's a viral vector vaccine. It uses a modified version of a different virus (the vector) to deliver important instructions to our cells. This prompts our bodies to build T-lymphocytes and B-lymphocytes that will remember how to fight that virus if we are infected in the future.

Read more from the CDC about Understanding How COVID-19 Vaccines Work.

How can I get a vaccine?
If you are age 12 or older, you can schedule a COVID-19 vaccination appointment. Click here to register or call 211 (866-211-9966) if you do not have access to a computer or need assistance. You can also visit the Indiana COVID-19 Vaccine Site Map to find an interactive map of vaccine providers across the state. Walk-in appointments are also accepted at most vaccination sites. Please note that you must receive the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine if you are younger than 18.

Who is eligible for boosters?
You may be eligible for a booster if you are a Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine recipient who completed your initial series at least 6 months ago if you meet one or more of the criteria below.

You **should** receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 Vaccine at least 6 months after completing your Pfizer-BioNTech primary series (i.e., the first 2 doses of a COVID-19 vaccine) if you are:
- 65 years and older
- 18+ and live in a long-term care setting
- 50–64 years old with underlying medical conditions

You **may** receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 Vaccine at least 6 months after completing your Pfizer-BioNTech primary series, based on your individual benefits and risks if you are:
- 18-49 years old with underlying medical conditions
- 18-64 years old at increased risk for COVID-19 exposure and transmission because of occupational or institutional setting

What are the benefits of a booster dose?

The booster dose improves your immune response. With the Delta variant's dominance as the circulating strain and cases of COVID-19 increasing significantly across the United States, a booster shot will help strengthen your protection against severe disease — especially if you are at high-risk for exposure to COVID-19 or the complications from severe disease.

How can long-term care residents get vaccinated?
Seniors are among those most seriously impacted by COVID-19. Ask facility management about getting vaccinated through their partner pharmacy.

What is the time for immunity once fully vaccinated and how long does immunity last? Do I have to get a vaccine every year like the flu?
In general, you are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after the second dose in a two-dose Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, or two weeks after the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen single-dose vaccine. If you have been fully vaccinated, you can resume activities that you did prior to the pandemic. While COVID-19 vaccines are working well, some people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 will still get sick, because no vaccine is 100% effective. If you are vaccinated, you should continue to wear a mask indoors in public indoor settings where community transmission is substantial or high.

If you have a condition or are taking medications that weaken your immune system, you may not be fully protected even if you are fully vaccinated. You should continue to take all precautions recommended for unvaccinated people until advised otherwise by your healthcare provider. People with moderately to severely

compromised immune systems should receive an [additional dose of mRNA COVID-19](#) vaccine — either Pfizer or Moderna — 28 days after the initial two doses.

Can I get a COVID-19 and flu vaccine at the same time?
Yes, you can get a COVID-19 vaccine and a flu vaccine at the same time.

Even though both vaccines can be given at the same visit, you should follow the recommended schedule for either vaccine: If you haven't gotten your currently recommended doses of COVID-19 vaccine, get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you can, and ideally get a flu vaccine by the end of October at the start of flu season, but any time after is still effective.

Can I get vaccinated if I recently had COVID-19?
Once you have recovered from your illness and have [met the criteria](#) for ending isolation, you can get vaccinated. You should not get vaccinated while ill or during an isolation or quarantine period to avoid exposing others. Research has shown that natural immunity from a COVID-19 infection typically lasts 90 days, but you don't need to wait that long to get vaccinated. Evidence is emerging that people who have been fully vaccinated have better protection against COVID-19 than those who were previously infected but never got vaccinated. 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 healthcare professional if you are unsure what treatments you received or if you have more questions about getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

After a person receives both doses of the vaccine, if they develop cold/flu symptoms, what are the recommendations? Should they be tested for SARS-CoV-2 and influenza?
You may experience some discomfort in the days following your immunization. These discomforts can be an indication that your body's immune system is working with the vaccine to develop antibodies. These discomforts should only last a few days and may include:

- Pain or redness where the shot was given
- Soreness in the arm where the shot was given
- Fatigue
- Chills
- Fever

These are some of the common symptoms experienced in the days after vaccination. This does not mean you have COVID-19. The vaccine cannot give you COVID-19 or other infections. If you develop a cough, sore throat or runny nose, please follow current monitoring and testing guidelines for COVID-19.

If you have received the vaccine, you are encouraged to participate in [V-safe](#), an after-vaccination health checker that works on your smartphone.

If you believe you may be experiencing a reaction to the shot, contact your medical provider and report it via the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). Reports can be entered here: https://vaers.hhs.gov/esub/index.jsp.

Will the vaccine make antibody tests positive?
COVID-19 vaccines teach your body to produce antibodies to fight infection from the virus that causes COVID-19. If you get an antibody test after receiving a vaccine, you might test positive by some (but not all)

antibody tests. This depends on which type of antibody the specific test detects. COVID-19 vaccines will not cause you to test positive on viral tests.

Will the vaccine be mandatory?
The state of Indiana will not mandate the COVID-19 vaccine. The decision regarding whether to mandate that individuals receive the vaccine will likely be made by the employers, schools, institutes of learning or other non-healthcare entities.

Do I still have to quarantine if I am a contact of someone with COVID-19 if I'm vaccinated?
If you are [fully vaccinated](#), you do not need to quarantine if exposed to someone with COVID-19 starting from two weeks after you received your last dose. However, it is recommended that you get tested 3-5 days after exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days after exposure or until you receive a negative test result.

After you are vaccinated, can you stop wearing masks?
There is no state mandate in Indiana requiring you to wear a mask. Due to the circulating and highly contagious Delta variant, CDC recommends that you wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an area of [substantial or high transmission](#) — even if you are fully vaccinated. You might choose to wear a mask regardless of the level of transmission if you have a weakened immune system or if, because of your age or an [underlying medical condition](#), you are at increased risk for severe disease, or if a member of your household has a weakened immune system, is at increased risk for severe disease, or is unvaccinated. [CDC does require masking](#) on planes, buses, trains, and other forms of public transportation traveling into, within, or out of the United States and while indoors at U.S. transportation hubs such as airports and stations. It also recommends universal indoor masking by all students (age 2 and older), staff, teachers, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status. Check your local health department website for more information on public health guidance in your area.

Should I get a COVID-19 vaccine if I have had allergic reactions to other injections?
If you are allergic to polyethylene glycol (PEG) or polysorbate, you should not get a COVID-19 vaccine at this time. PEG and polysorbate are closely related to each other. PEG is an ingredient in the mRNA vaccines, and polysorbate is an ingredient in Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine.

If you have had an immediate allergic reaction — even if it was not severe — to a vaccine or injectable therapy for another disease, ask your doctor if you should get a COVID-19 vaccine. Your doctor will help you decide if it is safe for you to get vaccinated.

CDC recommends that you get vaccinated even if you have a history of severe allergic reactions not related to vaccines or injectable medications—such as food, pet, venom, environmental, or latex allergies. You may also get vaccinated if you have a history of allergies to oral medications or a family history of severe allergic reactions.

Additional resources:
- State of Indiana Coronavirus Information: https://ourshot.in.gov
- Pfizer Vaccine Fact Sheet for Recipients (English): https://www.fda.gov/media/144414/download

- Pfizer Vaccine Fact Sheet for Recipients (Spanish / Additional Languages): https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/pfizer-biontech-covid-19-vaccine#additional
- Moderna Vaccine Fact Sheet for Recipients (English): https://www.modernatx.com/covid19vaccine-eua/.
- Moderna Vaccine Fact Sheet for Recipients (Spanish / Additional Languages): https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/moderna-covid-19-vaccine.
- Johnson & Johnson (Janssen) Vaccine Fact Sheet for Recipients (English): https://www.fda.gov/media/146305/download
- Johnson & Johnson (Janssen) Vaccine Fact Sheet for Recipients (Spanish / Additional Languages): https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/janssen-covid-19-vaccine#additional
- CDC COVID-19 Vaccine Information: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines.html
- CDC Information on mRNA Vaccines: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/mrna.html
- CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) Recommendations: https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs/vacc-specific/covid-19.html
- CDC Vaccine Safety: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety.html
- CDC Vaccine Booster Eligibility Information: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/booster-shot.html
- Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS): https://vaers.hhs.gov/esub/index.jsp.