

COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions

Resources: Infection Control Department, Newberry County Memorial Hospital
Mayo Clinic

1) Is this a LIVE vaccine?

- a. No. The vaccine does not contain any live or killed part of the virus.

2) Will I be contagious after I get the vaccine?

- a. No. The vaccine does not contain the virus. You may have temporary symptoms for 1-2 days after the vaccine. This is a sign that the vaccine is working and your body's immune system is responding.

3) Can the vaccine alter my DNA?

- a. The vaccine made by Pfizer is an mRNA type vaccine. mRNA is not able to alter or modify a person's genetic makeup (DNA). The mRNA in the COVID vaccine never gets to the part of the cell where our DNA is kept. This means the mRNA does not get near or interact with our DNA. mRNA is also very delicate and will break down very quickly. It will not be in the body for very long.

4) How many people have been given the vaccine so far in clinical trials?

- a. In the phase 3 clinical trials, half the people get the vaccine and half get a placebo. Over 20,000 people have gotten the Pfizer vaccine and over 15,000 people have gotten the Moderna vaccine in phase 3 trials. Roughly another 1,000+ people were given the vaccine as part of phase 1 and 2 clinical trials for each vaccine. See the last question for a table of details about the people who were given the Pfizer vaccine in phase 3 trial.

5) Did anyone die or have a serious reaction to the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines?

- a. No. There have been no deaths or serious reactions that caused someone to need emergency room treatment.

6) What are the temporary symptoms of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines?

- a. Almost all people had mild to moderate pain at the injection site. Mild to no symptoms were reported after the first dose. However, more than half the people had mild to moderate fatigue, chills, headache, and muscle aches after the second dose. These temporary symptoms go away after 1-2 days and can be treated with

Tylenol. Remember this is a common immune response to many vaccines and can give a better immune response.

7) What are the long-term effects of the vaccine?

- a. At this time, it is not known about the rare effects and if there are any long-term effects until millions are vaccinated.

8) Is the vaccine effective? Will it stop me from getting the virus?

- a. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccine have been found to be 95% effective. There were 11 people who had symptoms and tested positive for COVID after receiving the Moderna vaccine. None of these people had severe cases of COVID. There were 8 people who had symptoms and tested positive for COVID after receiving the Pfizer vaccine. One person had a severe case of COVID, but did not die.

This means you are very likely to not get the virus, or to get the virus and not be symptomatic. This is why we will continue to wear masks for some time.

9) How long will immunity last after taking the vaccine?

- a. At this time, this is not known. The trials only tested people for COVID if they got the vaccine and had symptoms. The people in the trials are still being followed.

10) Is the vaccine safe in pregnancy and breastfeeding?

- a. Pregnant women are excluded from vaccine trials. Because there is no virus in the vaccine, the theoretical risk (best guess) of fetal harm from mRNA vaccine is very low. The Society for Fetal and Maternal Medicine recommend that healthcare workers who are pregnant be offered the vaccine. More info can be found here: <https://www.smfm.org/covidclinical>.

11) Is the vaccine safe in immunocompromised groups?

- a. The vaccine was given to people with stable pre-existing conditions, such as diabetes, cancer, hepatitis B and C, and well-managed HIV. If you have concerns, please discuss with your physician.

12) What are the ingredients of the vaccine?

- a. This information is not available at this time. It will be released when approved for emergency use by the FDA.

13) Is the vaccine contraindicated in any group of people?

- a. This information is not available at this time. It will be released when approved for emergency use by the FDA.

14) If I had COVID, should I get the vaccine?

- a. YES. Natural immunity from the infection seems to last about 90 days. There is not a determined timeframe from time of infection to time of getting the vaccine, as of now. If past 90 days, there is no need to delay because you are likely not to be immune. If fewer than 90 days, your potential risk of re-infection should be considered. For example, an ICU nurse has a higher risk of infection than someone who does not have direct patient care.

15) If I get the vaccine, do I still have to wear a mask and socially distance?

- a. YES, for some time we will need to continue all of our efforts to prevent the spread of COVID. It will take some time for the virus to be eliminated and widespread immunity to take effect.

16) Has the full data from the trials been published?

- a. Not yet. The companies are releasing news to the public as they have it. This is much easier and faster than preparing a scientific article for publication. Pfizer has stated that it will publish all data in a top-ranked peer reviewed journal. After the request to publish data is made, it is up to the journal as to how long it will take to publish. For updated information, visit. <https://www.fda.gov>.

17) Have there been any short cuts made with the clinical trials?

- a. No. The companies developing these vaccines must follow strict rules for determining safety and efficacy. Monitoring and follow-up research will continue for years with the mRNA vaccines and other vaccines that also come available.

18) How can this happen so quickly?

- a. There are several factors. Companies were already studying vaccines for SARs and MERs. Companies have been sharing information with regulators for months. Manufacturing of the vaccine started before we knew for sure it would be safe and effective.

19) In whom has the Pfizer vaccine been tested?

The table shows characteristics of people in Pfizer’s phase 3 trial who got the vaccine. Remember that the people who participate are volunteers.

Characteristic	Total people who received vaccine = 20,033	Comments
Sex	Female - 9794 Male – 10,239	
Age groups	16 – 18 yr = 77 16 – 55 yr = 11,589 > 55 yr = 8,396 > 65 yr = 4,294 > 75 yr = 860	It was given to a small amount of people 12 – 16 yr. They are not being included in the emergency use request because of the small number
Race	White – 16,387 Black or African American – 1,957 Asian – 880 Other or not reported - 809	
Ethnicity	Not Hispanic/Latino – 14,652 Hispanic/Latino – 5,272 Not reported – 109	
Comorbidities	YES – 9,278 NO – 10,755 Obesity – 6,934	Comorbidities were defined using the Charleston comorbidity index. The most common comorbidities were obesity (35%), diabetes (7.8%), and COPD (7.8%).
Geographically	United States – 76.7% Argentina – 15.3% Brazil – 6.1% South Africa – 2%	