



COVID-19 VACCINES AND RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITY POPULATIONS

Racial and ethnic minority people are more likely than white people to get sick, become hospitalized, or die from COVID-19. It is important that we use every tool to stay healthy and to stop the pandemic. There are now safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines available. However, far fewer racial and ethnic minority people have gotten the vaccine than white people so far. Available data show that minority populations have lower vaccination rates than Non-Hispanic whites. To view the latest information on the demographic characteristics of vaccinated people, visit covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#vaccination-demographic.

The HHS Office of Minority Health recommends that you get the vaccine when you can—don't miss your chance to protect yourself and the people around you. This fact sheet provides information to help address concerns you might have about the COVID-19 vaccines, like safety, cost, and side effects. For the latest information and guidance, visit the CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>.

Key Facts about COVID-19 Vaccines:

- **They help protect you and others** – The COVID-19 vaccine helps your body develop immunity to the disease. Getting vaccinated, wearing masks, hand washing, and staying six feet from others will help stop the spread of COVID-19 and help us get back to normal.
- **They are effective** – COVID-19 vaccines are very effective at keeping you from getting COVID-19. They may help prevent you from getting seriously ill even if you do get COVID-19. These vaccines cannot give you COVID-19.
- **They are safe** – The U.S. vaccine safety system makes sure that all vaccines are as safe as possible. All the COVID-19 vaccines have gone through the same safety tests and meet the same standards as any other vaccine produced through the years.
- **They are free** – The federal government is providing the vaccine free of charge to people living in the United States. You can get the vaccine at no cost [regardless of your insurance](#) or [immigration status](#).

Making Sure Vaccines are Safe

Over 117 million people have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 as of May 12, 2021, under the most intense safety monitoring in U.S. history. For the latest numbers on COVID-19 vaccinations in the United States, visit <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#vaccinations>. However, past experiences have caused racial and ethnic minority populations to distrust the federal government and health care systems. In the Tuskegee study on syphilis among Black men, the U.S. government misled participants and withheld treatment from those who were sick. Discrimination by doctors and other health care providers has also led to mistrust.

It is important for racial and ethnic minority people to feel safe and receive quality health care, including the COVID-19 vaccine. The federal government has a process and rules for making sure COVID-19 vaccines are safe before they are given to anyone. Makers of COVID-19 vaccines must do research, through clinical trials, to ensure the vaccines are safe and effective. The federal government also has monitoring systems to make sure people getting the vaccine are safe. Find out more at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety.html.

Clinical trials help us understand the safety and effectiveness of vaccines.

Clinical trials are research studies, with volunteers, that help answer questions about the safety and effectiveness of drugs, vaccines, and other medical products. Once researchers determine that clinical trial results show that a drug, vaccine, or medical device is safe and effective, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) must approve before it can be used. During public health emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic, clinical trials can move faster but still must meet the FDA's high safety, effectiveness, and manufacturing standards. Find out more about the clinical trial process at www.fda.gov/drugs/drug-information-consumers/fdas-drug-review-process-ensuring-drugs-are-safe-and-effective. Learn more about COVID-19 clinical trials at:

- NIH COVID-19 Prevention Network and Volunteer Screening Registry – <https://www.coronaviruspreventionnetwork.org/>
- ClinicalTrials.gov – <https://clinicaltrials.gov/>

Diversity in clinical trials and vaccine safety monitoring systems helps us make sure vaccines are safe for racial and ethnic minority people.

In the past, clinical trials in the U.S. have not included enough racial and ethnic minority participants. It is important to test drugs, vaccines, and other medical devices on the people these products are meant to help. Therefore, people of different ages, races, ethnic groups, and genders need to be included in clinical trials.

Tens of thousands of people participated in the trials for the COVID-19 vaccines that are now available. While racial and ethnic minority populations are under-represented in the COVID-19 trials so far, the trials for the three current FDA-authorized vaccines (Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson) were more diverse than many previous trials for other drugs. The trials showed that the vaccines were equally effective for all racial and ethnic groups. In current and future clinical trials, the federal government, trial sponsors, and health care providers should make sure more racial and ethnic minority people can participate.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and FDA also oversee systems to ensure vaccines are safe. After a vaccine is approved for use, many vaccine safety monitoring systems watch for possible side effects. This monitoring is critical to help ensure that the benefits continue to outweigh the risks for people who receive vaccines. Find out more at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/safety-of-vaccines.html>.

What You Need to Know About Getting the COVID-19 Vaccine

Different types of COVID-19 vaccines are available.

Most of these vaccines are given in two shots, one at a time in two separate sessions. The first shot gets your body ready. The second shot is given at least three weeks later to make sure you have full protection. If you are told you need two shots, make sure that you get both of them. You are not fully vaccinated until two weeks after the second dose of a two-dose vaccine, or two weeks after a one-dose vaccine.

The vaccines may work in slightly different ways, but all types of the authorized vaccines will help protect you. Find out more at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines.html>.

Vaccines are more widely available.

Vaccines are now more widely available for everyone at no cost. Everyone ages 12 and older is recommended to get a COVID-19 vaccine. Each state makes its own plan for providing vaccines. Contact your state health department for information about the vaccine distribution plan for where you live. Many doctors' offices, retail pharmacies, hospitals, and clinics offer COVID-19 vaccinations. You can also use the VaccineFinder (<https://vaccinefinder.org/>) to find providers and pharmacies in your state offering the COVID-19 vaccine.

The federal government is also partnering with retail pharmacies, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) health centers, and dialysis centers to make the vaccine available. Visit the following webpage for more information and locations:

- Federal Retail Pharmacy Program for COVID-19 Vaccination - <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/retail-pharmacy-program/participating-pharmacies.html>
- Health Center COVID-19 Vaccine Program – <https://www.hrsa.gov/coronavirus/health-center-program/participants>
- Vaccinating Dialysis Patients and Healthcare Personnel – <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/planning/dialysis-partners-jurisdictions.html>

There is no cost to get a vaccine.

The federal government is providing the vaccine **free** of charge to people living in the United States, regardless of their immigration or insurance status. No one will receive a bill for a COVID-19 vaccine. However, your vaccination provider may bill your insurance company, Medicaid, or Medicare for an administration fee. You cannot be denied a vaccine if you are unable to pay the vaccine administration fee.

Information collected for vaccination cannot be used for immigration enforcement.

No information collected for vaccination can be used for immigration enforcement or for the determination of eligibility for public benefits. You might be asked for your address, phone number, and other personal information at your vaccination appointment. This information can be used to monitor vaccine safety and to follow up with you if you need a second vaccine dose. You might also be asked for insurance and Social Security information, but you do not need to give this information to get vaccinated. Vaccine providers might ask for insurance or Social Security information so they can charge administrative fees to insurance companies or the federal government.

Some people may experience mild side effects from the vaccine, and this is normal.

Some people have no side effects after receiving the COVID-19 vaccination. Many people have mild side effects, like pain or swelling at the injection site, a headache, chills, or fever. These reactions are common and are normal signs that your body is building protection. For most people, these side effects will last no longer than a day or two. Having these types of side effects does NOT mean that you have COVID-19.

After you get a COVID-19 vaccine, you will be asked to stay for 15–30 minutes so you can be observed in case you have a severe allergic reaction. In the rare case that someone has a severe allergic reaction, treatment will be provided.

If you have questions about your health after your shot, call your primary health care practitioner such as a doctor, nurse, or local clinic. As with any medicine, it is rare but possible to have a serious reaction, like not being able to breathe. It is very unlikely that this will happen, but if it does, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. Find out more at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/expect/after.html>.

If you are fully vaccinated, you can resume activities that you did before the pandemic.

You are fully vaccinated two weeks after you get all doses of the vaccine. Keep taking all precautions until you are fully vaccinated. Cover your mouth and nose with a mask and stay at least 6 feet away from others when in public or around others who are unvaccinated from more than one household, avoid crowds, avoid poorly ventilated spaces, and wash your hands often. 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. Talk to your healthcare provider. Even after vaccination, you may need to continue taking all precautions.

Fully vaccinated people can resume activities without wearing a mask or physically distancing, except where required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance. Find the latest guidance at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>.

We are learning more about the vaccine.

The federal government continues to investigate the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines—how well they prevent you from spreading the virus, how long they protect you, and how effective they are against new variants of the virus. Viruses constantly change through mutation, and new variants of a virus are expected to occur over time. Find the latest information and guidance at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>.