

Town of Middlebury
Emergency Management Bulletin
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COVID Vaccine - Frequently Asked Questions

A shout out to UVM Health network for providing these FAQs on the vaccine:

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccines are being developed rapidly to fight the pandemic, but the fast-track process follows rigorous testing for safety and efficacy through vaccination trials. Based on these results, the FDA approved the emergency use of the vaccine developed by Pfizer, and other vaccines may soon be reviewed for emergency authorization as well. The vaccination trial process tests the vaccine in thousands of people, many of whom are at high risk if they contract the virus, and focuses specifically on the identification of common side effects or safety concerns. The UVM Medical Center and the UVM Larner College of Medicine are currently participating in a trial for the vaccine developed by AstraZeneca.

Should I get the vaccine if I've already had COVID-19? (Updated 12/15 @ 2:50pm)

Yes, the CDC recommends that you get vaccinated even if you have already had COVID-19, because you can catch it more than once. While you may have some short-term antibody protection after recovering from COVID-19, we don't know for sure how long this protection will last. Current evidence suggests reinfection is uncommon in the 90 days after initial infection and patients who experienced symptoms over the last 90 days may defer vaccination until the end of this period.

Is it safe to get a COVID-19 vaccine if I have an underlying medical condition?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccination is especially important for people with underlying health problems like heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, and obesity. People with these conditions are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19. Currently Pfizer is recommending that anyone who has had a severe allergic reaction to ingredients in the vaccine should not get the vaccine.

Do I have to wear a mask if I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. To change the course of the pandemic, it is critical that we continue to follow all of the preventative guidelines outlined by the CDC, local departments of health and state government in Vermont and New York while vaccines are administered. The virus is still with us, and because the country is early in the vaccination process, we do not yet know everything about vaccine-induced immunity to the virus that causes COVID-19. We all need to continue to wear masks, distance ourselves from others, wash our hands and strictly follow local guidance on gathering with others outside of our households.

How long will the COVID-19 vaccine last?

While we have made progress in our understanding of this virus, we still have a great deal to learn about COVID-19. For example, we don't know how long protection will last after vaccination. This is why it is important to measure long-term protection through additional clinical trials. The CDC confirms that we need more data on how long vaccination immunity lasts.

Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccine?

None of the COVID-19 vaccines currently in development in the United States use the live virus that causes COVID-19. This means you can't "get" COVID-19 from the vaccine. The goal of each of the vaccines in development is to teach our immune systems how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19. At the same time, it's important for you to know that it typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination. That means it's possible you could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and get sick.

Is it better to get natural immunity to COVID-19 rather than immunity from a vaccine?

No. While you may have some short-term antibody protection after recovering from COVID-19, we don't know how long this protection lasts. Vaccination is the best protection, and it is safe. People who get COVID-19 can have serious illnesses, and some have debilitating symptoms that persist for months

Does the COVID-19 vaccine have any side effects?

Based on what we know now, you may experience minor side effects after getting one or both doses of vaccine. The most common side effects that have been reported include a sore arm at the injection site, fatigue, headache, chills and possibly a fever. These should go away on their own in a day or two.

I heard that I shouldn't get the vaccine if I've had a severe allergic reaction – is that true?

Currently, Pfizer is recommending that anyone who has had a severe allergic reaction to ingredients in the vaccine should not get the vaccine because there is a remote chance that the Pfizer vaccine could cause a severe allergic reaction. A severe allergic reaction would usually occur within a few minutes to one hour after getting a dose of the vaccine. Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include:

- Difficulty breathing
- Swelling of your face and throat
- A fast heartbeat
- A bad rash all over your body
- Dizziness and weakness

This is not to be confused with common allergies such as food, pet, environmental, or non-serious reactions to vaccines in the past.

Can I get the Pfizer vaccine if I've already had monoclonal antibodies?

Yes, but the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) within the CDC recommend waiting to get the vaccine until 90 days after the treatment.

What if I am pregnant or breastfeeding – is it still safe to get the vaccine? (Updated 12/15 @ 2:50pm)

The vaccine has not yet been studied in those who are pregnant or breastfeeding. However, the FDA, American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) have suggested that if a person fits a high-risk group (such as pregnancy), you may choose to get the vaccine. The same recommendation would apply to women who are breastfeeding. In either case, if you have further questions you should consult your provider to discuss your options.

Is there anyone else who should not get the COVID-19 vaccine?

So far, the vaccine has not been tested in children under 18 years of age, pregnant or breastfeeding women, or in individuals who are highly immunocompromised. Clinical trials will need to be expanded to include these groups in order for us to know more.

Why do some of the COVID-19 vaccines require two doses?

The first vaccine which is currently available, by Pfizer, and the second that is likely to be available, by Moderna, require two doses. Giving a second dose of a vaccine can boost immune response and improve the chances of protection from infection. However, all vaccines do not work the same way, so other vaccines may not require two doses.

Why do we need so many different vaccines?

While vaccine development is typically a long and complex process over the span of multiple years, the COVID-19 vaccine development process was accelerated with significant government and private investments. One of the benefits of this worldwide focus is that multiple groups of scientists were working simultaneously on different approaches for a vaccine – and this is good news, because it means that there's a greater likelihood of accelerating our response to the virus globally. Ultimately, the goal is to have a safe and effective vaccine for every person, regardless of age, demographics or underlying medical conditions.

What is the status of the COVID-19 vaccine trial at the UVM Medical Center?

250 participants are currently enrolled in the AstraZeneca vaccination trial being conducted by the UVM Medical Center and UVM Larner College of Medicine. [Learn more about the trial.](#)

Why are vaccine clinical trials still happening if we already have a vaccine?

Multiple vaccines are in various stages of development, and clinical trials tell us how effective the vaccines are likely to be – and how long immunity will last. For several of the vaccines under development, we are still learning about their safety and efficacy, so it's very important that the clinical trials continue throughout this process.