Frequently Asked Questions about the COVID-19 Vaccine

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Why should I get vaccinated for COVID-19?

COVID-19 can cause serious illness or even death. There is no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you. And if you get the virus, you could spread it to friends, family, and others around you, even if you have no symptoms or mild symptoms. All COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States have been shown to be very effective at preventing COVID-19. Even if you still get infected after you get vaccinated, the vaccine may keep you from getting very sick.

Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?

No, the vaccine does not cause COVID-19. None of the approved COVID-19 vaccines contain the live virus that causes COVID-19. It does take a few weeks after vaccination for your body to build up antibodies to protect you from the virus. That means it is possible you could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after getting the vaccine and still get sick.

Will the vaccine hurt or make me sick?

Some people might get sore muscles, feel tired, or have mild fever after getting the vaccine. These reactions mean the vaccine is working to help teach your body how to fight COVID-19 if you are exposed. For most people, these side effects will last no longer than a few days. If you have any concerns, call your doctor or nurse.

Should I get vaccinated if I already had COVID-19?

Yes, you should still be vaccinated because you can become infected more than once. Although you may have some short-term natural protection (known as immunity) after recovering from COVID-19, we do not know how long this protection will last. Vaccination is the best protection, and it is safe. People who get COVID-19 can have serious illnesses, and some have symptoms that continue for months. If you have had COVID-19, ask your doctor, nurse, or clinic when you should be vaccinated.

When can I get the vaccine?

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has set up a timeline for the vaccine, with three phases, starting with health care workers and older/sicker people and ending with the general public. Go to **www.mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine** to find out when you can get the vaccine. Once the vaccine is available to the general public, public vaccine clinics will be available on the CDC's interactive website: **www.vaccinefinder.org**. The state of Massachusetts also has vaccination sites open. To sign up, you can visit **mass.gov/COVIDVaccineMap**.

Do I have to pay for the vaccine?

No. The federal government is providing the vaccine free of charge to all people living in the United States.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE VACCINE AT:

Greater Lowell Health Alliance: **greaterlowellhealthalliance.org/covid-19**
Lowell Community Health Center: **lchealth.org/patients/covid-19-updates**
CDC: **cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html**
MA DPH: **mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-updates-and-information#covid-19-vaccine-**

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Which is the best vaccine?

The best vaccine is the one you can get. One vaccine is not clearly better than the other. All vaccines that have been approved in the US are safe and effective in preventing severe illness and death. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized the vaccines for emergency use, and doctors and independent experts confirmed they meet high safety standards.

Who should not get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Before getting a vaccine, tell your vaccine provider if you:

» Have a history of severe allergic reactions,

» Have a fever,

» Have a bleeding disorder or take blood thinners,

» Are immunocompromised or are on a medicine that affects your immune system,

» Are pregnant, plan to become pregnant, or are lactating,

» Have received another COVID-19 vaccine.

You should not get the vaccine if you have had a serious allergic reaction to a previous dose of the COVID-19 vaccine or to any ingredient in the vaccine. The vaccines contain the active ingredient, messenger RNA (mRNA), along with fat, salts, and sugars to protect the mRNA and help it work better in the body. You must be at least 16 or 18 years old to get the vaccine, depending on which vaccine you get.
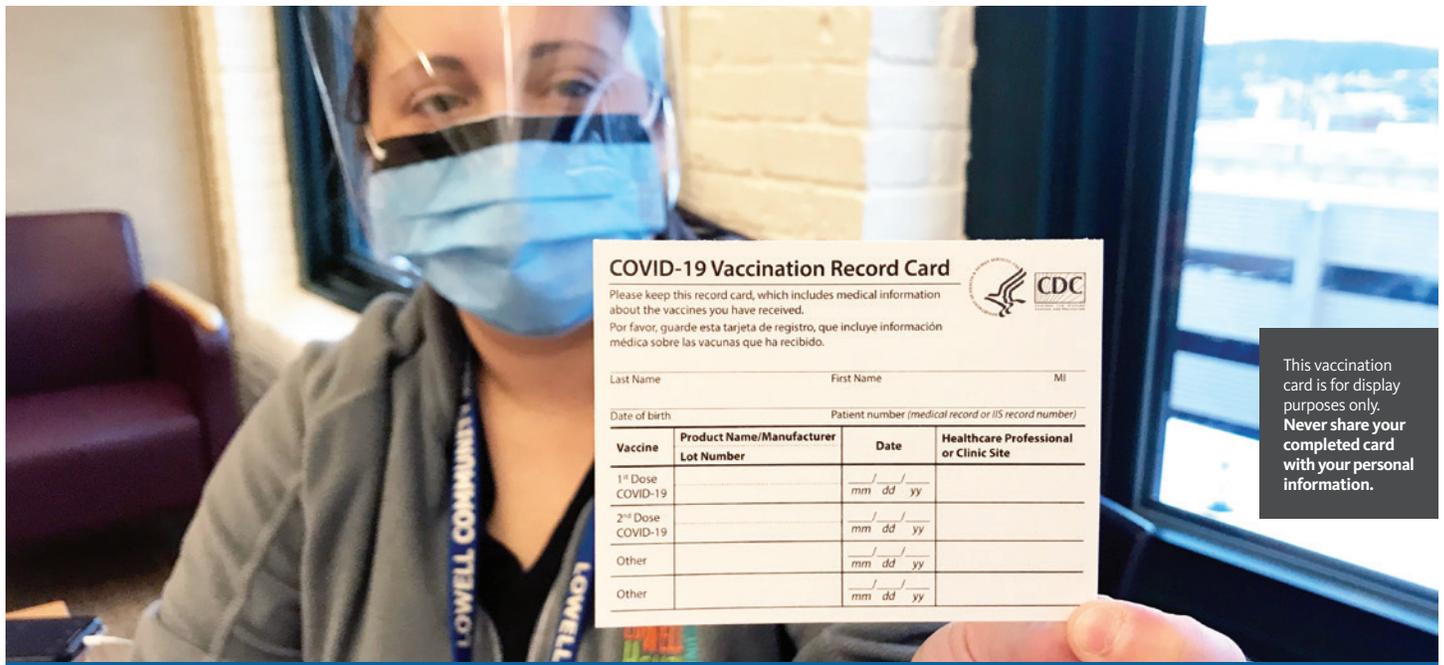
How many vaccine doses will I get and how long between them?

Depending on which vaccine you receive, you may get a single dose or two doses, three to four weeks apart.

Do I still need to wear a mask and socially distance after getting the vaccine?

People who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 can gather in small groups without masks or physical distancing. But if you are around people who have not had the vaccine, you still need to wear your mask, stay six feet apart, and wash your hands often.

*Source: CDC | Rev. 3/10/21

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