COVID-19
Important Information About COVID Vaccines
DECEMBER 17, 2020

Do I need to get a COVID vaccine?
Yes. A 2 dose series of this vaccine can help protect you, your family and your community from this virus, which can cause serious illness and sometimes even death. The vaccine is an important part of everyone being able to safely go back to work, school, church and other activities you enjoy. BUT the vaccine will not be enough by itself to protect any of us until we reach a point where enough of our population is vaccinated for us to develop community immunity- this means we all need to continue masks, social distancing, avoiding crowds and ongoing strict handwashing at least into summer 2021.

Is the COVID vaccine safe?
Yes. The COVID vaccines available in the United States were made available to the public only after careful testing and scientific review both inside and outside the government to make sure they are safe and to make sure they help prevent persons vaccinated from catching of this virus.

Is the COVID vaccine safe for people of color?
Yes. The COVID vaccine trials were designed to include representation of all ethnic groups and populations. These trials show that the vaccine is as safe and effective in people of color as in white people. COVID-19 has resulted in more deaths and serious illness in people of color because of underlying health conditions and lack of access to care rather than any genetic differences. This is why it is especially important for people of color to be vaccinated as soon as they are eligible.

How long will it take for the vaccine to work?
After you get a vaccine, you may develop some protection from the vaccine by two weeks after the first dose. All the current COVID vaccines (and most of those which are still being tested) require two doses, it is very important that you receive a second dose to provide you with maximum protection from the vaccine against COVID-19.

Do I have to wear a mask after I get a vaccine?
Yes. Masks, hand washing and social distancing will continue to be important well into 2021. A large percentage of the population of people has to be vaccinated before we are protected from the virus. Even after the majority of people are vaccinated, persons who have not been vaccinated may catch COVID from other people who have not been vaccinated. Research shows the vaccine is very effective at keeping you from catching COVID-19 and making your symptoms less severe if you do get the virus. We don't yet know how well the virus keeps you from spreading the disease to others.

When and where can I get a vaccine?
The COVID vaccine will be given to high-risk people first. This includes healthcare workers and people living in nursing homes and other healthcare facilities. If you work in healthcare or another job where you may be exposed to people with COVID, ask your employer if you can get vaccinated at work. When there are enough vaccines available to offer them to others, the elderly and people with health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and lung disease will probably be offered the vaccine first. In the first half of 2021, vaccines should be available to most people in the United States. Ask your doctor or local health department for more information.

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Are there side effects from the vaccine?
Some people report mild side effects similar to those from a flu vaccine. These include a sore arm, feeling tired or unwell, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, swelling and redness where you got the shot, fever and nausea. These usually go away after a day or two.

Should my children get a COVID vaccine?
There is not enough information on COVID vaccines to recommend them for children under age 16. Until we have these studies, children should not be vaccinated. This recommendation may change in 2021 so ask your child's doctor.

Should I get a COVID vaccine if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?
You may be vaccinated if you are pregnant or breastfeeding, but first talk with your healthcare provider. Click here for more information.

Where can I learn more about COVID vaccines?
Ask your doctor or visit cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19.