



COVID-19 Vaccines: What You Should Know

Vaccines are the best tools we have to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and keep our communities healthy, but many people still have concerns about their safety. Here are some facts that can help you make an informed decision about your choice to get vaccinated.

What are the side effects of COVID-19 vaccines?

FACT: COVID-19 vaccines only cause minor, temporary side effects.

Some people worry that the COVID-19 vaccines will give them serious side effects, but the truth is they are not much different from flu shots and other routine vaccinations.

While you may feel sick after getting the vaccine, this is a normal sign that your immune system is building protection against the virus. Some people have no side effects at all, while others report symptoms like fatigue, soreness in the arm, fever, body aches and chills. These symptoms are usually mild and only last for a few days. You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccines, and allergic reactions are extremely rare.

Are COVID-19 vaccines safe?

FACT: COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective at preventing serious illness and hospitalization.

Many people are concerned that the vaccines were developed too quickly and may not be safe, but this is not true. The COVID-19 vaccine technology may be new, but it was built upon nearly two decades of work to develop vaccines for similar viruses, starting with the SARS virus in 2003. All three COVID-19 vaccines went through large clinical trials with tens of thousands of people, proving that they are safe.

The COVID-19 vaccines have shown to be effective at reducing hospitalization and deaths from COVID-19. People who contract COVID-19 and don't get the vaccine are at much higher risk of illness and hospitalization, especially in the autism community where many people have other medical conditions. Getting vaccinated for COVID-19 can help autistic people and their loved ones stay safe and healthy.

Can you trust COVID-19 vaccines?

FACT: COVID-19 vaccines are privately developed and thoroughly tested.

Many people are hesitant to get vaccinated because they distrust the government, but it's important to remember that the COVID-19 vaccines were developed by private companies, not government agencies. The government funded the development of the vaccines, tested their safety for public use and manufactured them once approved.

Some people say that COVID-19 vaccines contain microchips, but this is not true. The vaccines were developed to keep people safe, not for the government to track your movement. The ingredients in COVID-19 vaccines are also ingredients in many foods, making them perfectly safe for your body.

Getting the COVID-19 Vaccine

Try these tips to have a more comfortable COVID-19 vaccine experience. You can take these steps on your own or have a family member or other trusted support person help you.

BEFORE YOU GO

Find Your Local Vaccination Site



Before you get your COVID-19 vaccine, you will need to find your local vaccination site. While some sites allow walk-ins, others require you to make an appointment ahead of time. Visit acl.gov/DIAL to find a site near you and get help making an appointment. If you make an appointment, you will be able to pick a date and time that works for you.

Think About What You'll Need



Plan ahead to have a tablet, toy, fidget, headphones or visual supports to help you while waiting in line or being in a new setting. The wait for a vaccine is similar to waiting in a doctor's office. You may want someone you trust to help you prepare, get to the vaccine location, communicate with site staff, do paperwork and be with you during the waiting period after your shot.

Bring an ID and Vaccination Card



You will be asked to validate your identity. If you have already gotten a COVID-19 vaccine and are now getting a booster, bring your vaccination card so it can be updated with your new information.

ON VACCINE DAY

Check In



When you check in for your vaccination, you may have to fill out and sign paperwork. You may wish to disclose that you are autistic and ask for accommodations at check-in. You should wear your mask while you are getting vaccinated.

Get Your Shot



Most COVID-19 vaccines are given in your upper arm. If a family member or support person is with you, they can help you through this part of your visit. For safety reasons, you will be asked to wait 15 to 30 minutes at the site after you get your shot. This is another good time to use your planned activities, breathing exercises, tablet, toy or sensory item that helps you feel calm.

CONGRATULATIONS!



Getting the COVID-19 vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and others from getting sick from the coronavirus. Before you leave, ask the site staff whether you need an additional dose and how to schedule one if you do. They will give you information about what symptoms you can expect and what to do in the next few days. Make sure you drink plenty of water if you get a fever after your shot.

Download the Vaccine Experience Tool Kit for more information.

