COVID-19 Vaccine FAQs for Patients

These questions were answered by the Federation of American Scientists, doctors, nurse practitioners, and researchers. If you want to learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine, visit www.coronavirusnetwork.org.

How long does it take after getting a vaccine to be protected against the virus?

- Most of the COVID-19 vaccines require two doses taken three or four weeks apart.
- It is estimated that you will be protected fourteen days, or two weeks, after receiving the second dose.

After I get the vaccine can I stop wearing a mask and return to normal?

- No; experts are unsure, but it is possible that you can still spread the virus to other people after getting the vaccine.
- Until the majority of people are vaccinated and we learn more about the vaccine, we will need to continue wearing masks and taking other precautions.

Do any of the COVID-19 vaccines change my DNA?

- No. But you may hear that two of the vaccines, one by Pfizer/BioNTech and the other by Moderna, use messenger RNA (mRNA).
- mRNA is a small piece of the virus that won't make you sick, but helps protect people from getting COVID-19. It does not change your DNA.

What if I have "antibodies," does that mean I still need the vaccine?

- Yes; even if you had or think you had COVID-19, you should still get vaccinated.
- We don't know how long antibodies against the coronavirus last.
- Also, current tests for antibodies are not always correct.

Will the vaccine protect me from COVID-19 for life?

- We do not know yet. As the volunteers from the COVID-19 clinical trials are monitored, we will get more information on how long protection lasts.

At what point does the vaccine make the pandemic end?

- The vaccine will help us end the pandemic when enough people are protected from the virus that it can no longer spread.

- However, the vaccine is not your "get out of COVID-19 free" card. It is important to continue wearing masks, avoiding crowds, social distancing, and washing your hands.

Can my school / workplace make getting a vaccine mandatory?
- Mandatory vaccines are most common for public schools, and all 50 states require students to receive some vaccines, with exceptions for medical, religious, and philosophical reasons.
- Workplaces where there are increased risks of spreading the virus, such as a hospital or nursing home, may make the vaccine mandatory. In those cases, there still can be exemptions.
- We recommend speaking with your workplaces and schools if you learn they are considering making the vaccine mandatory.

I never get the flu shot, why should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?
- Even though most people who have COVID-19 do not die, the disease is much more deadly than the flu, and is easily spread from one person to another.
- The long-term effects of COVID-19 for those who survive seem to be severe.
- Getting vaccinated protects you, your family, and your community from the negative effects of COVID-19, including death.
- Getting vaccinated helps our hospitals stay open to everyone needing care, since it reduces the number of COVID-19 patients in the hospitals.

Why should I trust vaccines from companies or the government?
- Having concerns about the vaccine is understandable. Remember that tens of thousands of volunteers have received the COVID-19 vaccines and that the government and vaccine companies are closely monitoring the clinical trials. The findings are also public.
- Those who are vaccinated protect themselves against a possibly deadly disease.

For more up to date information, visit:
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Sources for this FAQ:

BBC	National Geographic	New England Journal of Medicine	Stat News
Center for Disease Control	Nature	New York Times	USA Today
FDA.gov	NBC News	NIH	Vaccines.gov