

FACT SHEET: Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccine (Comirnaty) Benefits and Risks

Based on careful review by national experts, we know the benefits of COVID-19 vaccines far outweigh the risks. Understand the benefits and risks of receiving the two-dose and three-dose Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, which may prevent you from getting COVID-19. It is your choice to receive this vaccine. Talk to the vaccination provider if you have questions.

About this Vaccine

This vaccine has been given full approval by the FDA for people aged 16 and older. This vaccine has FDA emergency use authorization for people aged 6 months to 15 years. This vaccine is injected into the muscle of the upper arm or thigh. Those 6 months to 4 years are given a three-dose series, the second dose given three weeks after the first, the third dose given eight weeks after the second. Those 5 years and older are given a two-dose series, three weeks apart.

Benefits of this Vaccine

This vaccine has been shown to prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and/or death from COVID-19 for people who complete their primary series (received both doses). Note: Some people aged 12-39 may consider waiting eight weeks between the first and second dose of the mRNA vaccine series.

What to Expect When You Get the Vaccine

You may have some side effects, which are normal signs that your body is building immunity against the disease. Side effects may include an injection site reaction, headache, feeling tired, muscle aches, nausea, or fever. Side effects should go away within a few days.

Risks Associated with this Vaccine

While there are small risks to getting the COVID-19 vaccine, the benefits of getting vaccinated outweigh the risks. Risks include:

- **Rare Severe Allergic Reaction:** There is a remote chance the vaccine could cause a severe allergic reaction (difficulty breathing, swelling of face and throat, fast heartbeat, bad rash all over your body, dizziness, weakness), which would usually occur a few minutes to one hour after getting the dose. If you experience a severe allergic reaction, call 9-1-1 or go to the nearest hospital.
- **Rare Myocarditis and Pericarditis:** There have been rare cases of myocarditis and pericarditis following [Pfizer COVID-19 vaccination](#). In most of these reported cases, patients were male, young adults who reported shortness of breath and chest pain following their second dose. When they presented for medical care they responded well to medications and rest, seeing a prompt improvement of symptoms. You should seek medical attention if you experience symptoms of myocarditis or pericarditis, including chest pain, shortness of breath, or abnormal heartbeat (beating fast, fluttering, or pounding).

If You Experience Side Effects

If you experience a severe allergic reaction, call 9-1-1, or go to the nearest hospital. Call the vaccination provider or your healthcare provider if you have any side effects that bother you or do not go away.

Vaccination Options

It is your choice to receive this vaccine and not getting it will not change your standard medical care. Other vaccines to prevent COVID-19 are available. Learn more about your options by reading the [Moderna COVID-19 \(Spikevax\) Vaccine Benefits and Risks Factsheet](#).

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Boosters

Immunity against disease and infection naturally wanes over time. A booster dose is a normal part of most vaccine series to ensure a person maintains optimal immunity against infection from a disease. Booster doses enhance protection against severe COVID-19, restoring immunity that might have faded since first doses were given. mRNA vaccines, including Pfizer, may be used for booster doses by all eligible people, regardless of vaccine type received for the primary series. mRNA vaccines are preferred for first booster doses and the only available option for second booster doses. (Please see the Moderna Factsheet for information on the other mRNA vaccine.) Eligibility includes people:

- Aged 5 and older should receive a first booster dose five months after their second dose
- Aged 12 and older and immunocompromised, should receive a first booster dose three months after their additional dose and should receive their second booster dose four months after receiving their first booster dose
- Aged 18 and older who received the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine for their primary series should receive a first booster dose two months after their first dose
- Aged 18 and older and immunocompromised, should receive a first booster dose three months after their additional dose and a second booster dose four months after their first booster dose
- Aged 50 and older should receive a second booster dose four months after receiving their first booster dose
- Aged 50 and immunocompromised, should receive a first booster dose three months after receiving their additional dose and a second booster dose four months after receiving their first booster dose

More Information

For more information on dosing intervals, please see [CDPH's COVID-19 Vaccine Timing by Age](#).

Additional information is available on the CDPH COVID-19 Booster website.

