Choosing the COVID-19 Vaccine that is Right for You

Three COVID-19 vaccines are available in the United States. Based on careful review by national experts, we know the benefits of COVID-19 vaccines far outweigh the risks. Understand the benefits and risks — to help you decide which vaccine is right for you.

COVID-19 Can Cause Severe Illness & Death
COVID-19 disease is caused by a coronavirus that spreads in the air, especially when an infected person speaks, sneezes, or coughs indoors. COVID-19 disease can cause severe illness, hospitalization, and death — and we are still learning about its long-term effects (also called Long COVID).

Vaccination is Recommended for People Aged 5 and Older
The CDC recommends that all individuals aged 5 and older receive COVID-19 vaccination — to prevent hospitalization and death.

Vaccine Options
• The Pfizer-BioNTech (two doses, three weeks apart), also known as Comirnaty, has been fully approved by the FDA for persons aged 16 and older.
• The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has FDA Emergency Use Authorization for use in persons aged 5-15.
• The Moderna (two doses, four weeks apart) vaccine, also known as Spikevax, has been fully approved by the FDA for persons aged 18 and older.
• The Johnson & Johnson vaccine has FDA Emergency Use Authorization for persons aged 18 years and older; however, the CDC recommends the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines over the Johnson & Johnson vaccine when possible.

Benefits of Getting the Vaccine
All vaccines currently available:
• Are proven to be safe and effective at preventing severe illness and death by COVID-19. (However, the CDC recommends the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines over the Johnson & Johnson vaccine when possible.)
• To receive the most protection, people should receive all recommended doses of the vaccine. Vaccinating as many people as possible will help us all get past this pandemic.

What to Expect When You Get the Vaccine
You may have some side effects from your COVID-19 vaccine, which are normal signs that your body is building immunity against the disease. Side effects may include pain or swelling at the injection site, headache, fatigue, muscle aches, nausea, or fever. Side effects should go away within a few days.

Rare Risks Associated with Getting the Vaccine
While there are rare risks to getting a COVID-19 vaccine, the benefits of getting vaccinated outweigh the risks. Rare risks include:
• Rare Severe Allergies: Rare, sudden allergic reactions may occur within a few minutes to one hour after getting a COVID-19 vaccine, including difficulty breathing, swelling of face and throat, fast heartbeat, bad rash all over your body, dizziness, or weakness. If you experience a severe allergic reaction, call 9-1-1, or go to the nearest hospital.
• Blood Clots with Low Levels of Platelets (J&J): Blood clots involving blood vessels in the brain, lungs, abdomen, and legs along with low levels of platelets (blood cells that help

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Seeking Care
Seek medical attention right away, or call 9-1-1, if you have severe symptoms after vaccination, such as trouble breathing or swallowing, swelling of the face or throat, shortness of breath, chest pain, leg swelling, persistent abdominal pain, severe or persistent headaches or blurred vision, or easy bruising or tiny blood spots under the skin beyond the site of the injection.

- **Rare Myocarditis and Pericarditis** *(Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna)*: There have been rare cases of myocarditis and pericarditis following Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccination particularly in male adolescents and young adults, more often after getting the second dose than the first dose and typically within several days of vaccination. In most of these reported cases, patients who presented for medical care have responded well to medications and rest and had prompt improvement of symptoms. You should seek medical attention if you experience symptoms of myocarditis or pericarditis, including chest pain, shortness of breath, and feelings of having a fast-beating, fluttering, or pounding heart.

- **Rare Guillain-Barre Syndrome** *(J&J)*: There have been rare cases of Guillain-Barre Syndrome after receiving the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine. Guillain-Barre Syndrome is an illness, usually triggered by an infection, in which the body’s immune system damages nerve cells, causing muscle weaknesses or in the most severe cases, paralysis. Cases of Guillain-Barre Syndrome have largely been reported about 2 weeks after vaccination with Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine and mostly in males, many age 50 years and older. You should seek medical attention if you experience weakness or tingling sensations in both legs, which may spread to the arms and upper body.

Boosters
Many people who received COVID-19 vaccines are eligible for a first or second booster dose. People aged 5-17 should receive a first booster dose and only of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. If immunocompromised, people aged 12-17 should receive a second booster dose of Pfizer COVID-19. People aged 18+ can choose any COVID-19 vaccine for their first booster dose but are recommended to get one. If immunocompromised, people aged 18-49 should receive a second booster dose of an mRNA vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna). People aged 18+ who are immunocompetent can receive a second booster dose of an mRNA vaccine if they received two doses of Johnson & Johnson. People aged 50 and older can choose any COVID-19 vaccine for their first booster dose but are recommended to get one. People aged 50 and older should receive a second booster dose of an mRNA vaccine. An mRNA COVID-19 vaccine is preferred over the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine for booster vaccination. Additional information is available on the [CDPH COVID-19 Booster web site](https://covid19.ca.gov/CDPH-COVID-19-Booster/).

More Information & to Get Vaccinated
Learn more at [VaccinateAll58](https://covid19.ca.gov/VaccinateAll58), visit [MyTurn.ca.gov](https://myturn.ca.gov) or call (833) 422-4255 to book your vaccine appointment, or find a walk-in clinic near you.

You can also check with your healthcare provider or stop by your local pharmacy.