

COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) For Parents and Guardians

1. Is the Pfizer mRNA COVID-19 vaccine really safe? What is the process of how vaccines are approved? What does EUA mean?

For individuals 12 years and older, the mRNA vaccines have been proven safe and effective with almost 260 million doses having been given out by mid-May 2021 that are held to the same rigorous safety and effectiveness standards as all other types of vaccines in the United States. The COVID-19 vaccines were evaluated in tens of thousands of participants in clinical trials. The vaccines met the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) rigorous scientific standards for safety, effectiveness, and manufacturing quality needed to support emergency use authorization (EUA) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. What is the Pfizer mRNA COVID-19 vaccine?

COVID-19 mRNA vaccines give instructions for our cells to make **a harmless piece** of what is called the "spike protein." The spike protein is found on the surface of the virus that causes COVID-19.

First, COVID-19 mRNA vaccines are given in the upper arm muscle. Once the instructions (mRNA) are inside the immune cells, the cells use them to make the protein piece. After the protein piece is made, the cell breaks down the instructions and gets rid of them.

Next, the cell displays the protein piece on its surface. Our immune systems recognize that the protein doesn't belong there and begin building an immune response and making antibodies, like what happens in natural infection against COVID-19. If you are exposed to the real virus later, your body will recognize it and know how to fight it off.

At the end of the process, our bodies have learned how to protect against future infection. The benefit of mRNA vaccines, like all vaccines, is those vaccinated gain this protection without ever having to risk the serious consequences of getting sick with COVID-19.

3. What are the benefits of my child being fully vaccinated with the COVID vaccine?

- The COVID-19 vaccines are one the most effective tools we have in the fight against COVID-19; greatly reducing the risk that your child will be sick with COVID-19. They are the best and only way this year to return to the things we enjoyed most before the pandemic.
- Receiving the COVID-19 vaccine provides your child with protection against the virus, greatly reducing the chance for moderate or severe illness, and lingering symptoms for months.
- The COVID-19 vaccines also help keep your family healthy, including grandparents and extended family members.
- Your child will not be required to quarantine if identified as a close contact of someone who has contracted COVID-19, so less lost time at school or extracurricular activities.
- It adds to the number of people in the community who are protected from getting COVID-19 – making it harder for the disease to spread and contributing to community-wide immunity.
- The COVID-19 vaccines prevent the COVID-19 virus from spreading and replicating, which allows it to mutate and possibly become more infectious, deadly and possibly resistant to vaccines.

4. Will a COVID-19 vaccination protect my child from getting sick with COVID-19?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccination works by teaching your immune system how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19, protecting you from serious illness, hospitalization and death .

The 12-15 year olds clinical trial information presented by Pfizer/BioNtech reported that the COVID-19 vaccine prevented 100 percent of symptomatic infections. Being protected from getting sick is important because even though many people with COVID-19 have only a mild illness, others may get a [severe illness](#), have [long-term health effects](#), or even die. There is no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you, even if you don't have an [increased risk of developing severe complications](#). Learn more about [how COVID-19 vaccines work](#).

5. My child has allergies. Can they receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

Children with a history of allergies can definitely receive the vaccine – whether it's an allergy to other vaccines or medications or to bee stings or food or pollen. The current COVID-19 vaccines do not use preservatives and eggs were not used in their development. Out of the tens of millions of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered to date, only 4 cases per million have resulted in a severe allergic reaction.

However, children with a history of an allergic reaction to a non-COVID vaccine or injectable therapy that contains multiple components – one of which is a component of a COVID-19 vaccine (such as polyethylene glycol or polysorbate) but in whom it is unknown which component caused the allergic reaction – should be considered a precautionary COVID-19 vaccination. They can still receive an available COVID-19 vaccine with appropriate counseling and post-vaccination monitoring for 30 minutes of observation.

6. Will COVID-19 vaccines impact puberty or future fertility?

According to [The American Academy of Pediatrics](#) there's no evidence that any vaccine, including those for COVID-19, causes fertility side effects. The vaccines don't affect puberty or a child's reproductive development in any way. It is safe for pregnant women and anyone who wants to become pregnant in the future. In fact, among the millions of people now immunized, there are women who got the COVID-19 vaccine while pregnant and women who became pregnant after getting it. Doctors have watched these cases closely, and have reported no safety problems.

The COVID-19 vaccines do NOT contain live-virus and break down quickly in your body after they're used to create an immune response. In addition, there is no evidence suggesting that fertility problems are a side effect of ANY vaccine.

7. Side Effects? How bad are they? What should my child expect after vaccination?

Similar to adults, the most common side effects include injection site swelling/pain, fever, chills, tiredness and headache. Other possible side effects may include muscle and/or joint pain, swollen lymph nodes, nausea and/or vomiting, or a general sense of feeling unwell. Most side effects occur within the first 3 days following vaccination and typically last 1-2 days. Side effects are more common after the second dose and indicate your body is building protection. Serious adverse reactions are rare. Please consult with your healthcare provider for any concerns or questions. See [What to Expect after Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine](#) from the CDC for more information.

8. What if my child is experiencing side effects, do I need to stay home? Do they need to get tested?

The initial side-effects from COVID-19 vaccines indicate that your child's body is developing antibodies to create immunity against the COVID-19 virus. These reactions should not keep them from going to school or doing other activities. However, have them stay home if they have a fever. It is not necessary to have a COVID-19 test or to quarantine.

However, respiratory symptoms or loss of taste and smell are NOT related to the vaccine reaction. If these or other symptoms are severe, persist or progress, then the symptomatic person should be tested for COVID-19 and follow COVID-19 protocols for quarantine and contact tracing.

9. What if my child develops symptoms after having a prior COVID-19 infection or completing the vaccine series?

Regardless of prior infection or vaccination status, any person with new or unexplained symptoms of COVID-19 still needs to isolate ([Isolation Guide](#)) and be evaluated for COVID-19 testing.

10. Will I still need to wear a mask and follow prevention measures after vaccination?

[COVID-19 vaccines](#) are effective at protecting you from getting sick. Based on [what we know](#) about COVID-19 vaccines, people who have been fully vaccinated can start to do some things that they had stopped doing because of the pandemic. CDC has released updated guidance for fully vaccinated people regarding mask wearing and physical distancing, noting exceptions where federal, state and local rules and regulations apply. NH State guidance still recommends even fully vaccinated individuals wear masks in public areas where physical distancing is not achievable.

11. If my child tested positive for COVID-19 in the past, do they still need to be vaccinated?

Yes. Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that re-infection with the COVID-19 variants is possible, children and adults with prior COVID-19 infection should be vaccinated to provide the highest level of protection against COVID-19.

At this time, experts do not know how long someone is protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. The immunity someone gains from having an infection, called natural immunity, varies from person to person. We don't yet know how long immunity produced by vaccination lasts until we have more data on how well the vaccines work.

12. If my child currently has COVID-19, how long do I need to wait to get vaccinated?

Immunization should be deferred until your child has recovered from acute illness and until [criteria](#) have been met to discontinue isolation (**at least 10 days** have passed since symptoms first appeared or date of positive test if no symptoms, fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and improvement in other symptoms). If you or your child were treated for COVID-19 with monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma during COVID-19 illness, you should **wait 90 days** before getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

13. If my child gets the vaccine, will they test positive for COVID-19?

No. None of the authorized COVID-19 vaccines can cause you to test positive on the viral tests (molecular - RNA/PCR test or antigen - rapid test) which are used to see if you have a **current infection**. If your body develops an immune response – the goal of vaccination – there is a possibility you may test positive on some [antibody tests](#). Antibodies developed from a **previous infection** and may have some level of protection against the virus. Experts are currently looking at how COVID-19 vaccination may affect antibody testing results.

14. Does my family still need to quarantine following travel or if they are exposed to COVID-19 after receiving the vaccination series?

The following people DO NOT need to quarantine after an exposure to a person with COVID-19, or after travel within the United States, Internationally or on a cruise ship.

- A person who is 14 days beyond the second dose of Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines, and 14 days past the first dose of the Janssen COVID-19 vaccine.
- A person who is within 90 days of a prior COVID-19 infection diagnosed by PCR or antigen testing. (if a person had a previous infection that was more than 90 days prior, then they should still follow the travel quarantine guidance)
- Fully vaccinated travelers should still follow recommendations for traveling safely that include: wearing a mask over your nose and mouth; staying 6 feet from others and avoid crowds; and washing your hands often or use hand sanitizer.

15. Will we need to get a booster dose every year like we do with the flu vaccine?

It is not yet known how long the vaccines protect us against COVID-19. But the CDC is continuing to monitor the data and keep the public informed as new information becomes available. Boosters are likely to be developed to extend immunity protection and combat COVID-19 variants as they emerge in broad populations. This has occurred with measles and pneumococcal vaccines already in use.

16. Who is paying for the COVID-19 Vaccines?

The federal government is providing the vaccine free of charge to all people living in the United States, regardless of their immigration or health insurance status.

COVID-19 vaccination providers cannot:

- Charge you for the vaccine.
- Charge you directly for any administration fees, copays, coinsurance, balance of the bill.
- Deny vaccination to anyone who does not have health insurance coverage or is out of network.
- Charge an office visit or other fee to the recipient if the only service provided is a COVID-19 vaccination.
- Require additional services in order for a person to receive a COVID-19 vaccine; however, additional healthcare services can be provided at the same time and billed as appropriate.

COVID-19 vaccination providers can:

- Seek appropriate reimbursement from the recipient's plan or program (e.g., private health insurance, Medicare, Medicaid) for a vaccine administration fee.

For more information, see [NH-DPHS COVID-190 FAQs for Education and Childcare Partners](#).