HealthLink

COVID-19 vaccine safety

It's natural to have questions about COVID-19 vaccine development and safety. Here are facts to help you better understand the vaccines.

Why is the COVID-19 vaccine important?

Vaccination is one of the best tools we have to stop the COVID-19 pandemic. All of the COVID-19 vaccines available in the U.S. have been proven highly effective in preventing people from getting sick with COVID-19. Vaccination against COVID-19 not only helps you, it may also help protect those around you.

How were the COVID-19 vaccines developed so fast?

Vaccine development is a complex process. It requires extensive research, testing, and assessment to make sure vaccines are safe to give to people and work well to prevent disease. Scientists from around the world worked together to speed up the process for the COVID-19 vaccines. They shared data and existing research on the virus that causes COVID-19. This helped them quickly launch the clinical studies required to help ensure the vaccines are safe. As a result, they were able to develop effective COVID-19 vaccines in less than a year.

How do we know the COVID-19 vaccines are safe?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration authorizes and approves vaccines in the U.S. It only does so for vaccines that meet its strict safety and effectiveness standards. This includes testing the vaccine by giving it to tens of thousands of volunteers.

When and where can I receive a COVID-19 vaccine?

Contact your local health department. They coordinate the distribution of vaccines in your area.

The CDC website provides a run-down of vaccine distribution plans by state. Find your state's plan at **cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html**.

Learn more

Visit the CDC website at **cdc.gov** for more information about the COVID-19 vaccine.

The federal CARES Act requires most health plans to cover the COVID-19 vaccine and its administration at $0 member cost share during the national public health emergency. You should contact your employer or benefit administrator to confirm the $0 cost share for vaccination; and to confirm coverage for COVID-19 testing and treatment. Learn more about COVID-19 and the resources available to you at **healthlink.com/COVID-19**.

The FDA's vaccine clinical trial and authorization/approval process

Research /data analysis/ laboratory testing

Clinical trials

Three phases of clinical trials help ensure vaccines are safe. Adults are tested first.

Phase 1

20-100 healthy volunteers

- Is it safe?
- Does it work?
- Are there any serious side effects?
- How does the size of the dose relate to side effects?

Phase 2

Several hundred volunteers

- What are the most common short-term side effects?
- How are volunteers' immune systems responding to the vaccine?

Phase 3

Tens of thousands of volunteers

- How do people who receive the vaccine compare to those who didn't?
- Is it safe?
- Does it work?
- What are the most common side effects?

Authorization/approval

The FDA authorizes or approves the vaccine only if it is safe and effective and its benefits outweigh any potential risks.

Distribution

Safety monitoring continues during and after the public receives the vaccine.

Sources:
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: cdc.gov.
U.S. Food and Drug Administration: fda.gov.
Medical News Today: medicalnewstoday.com.
World Health Organization: who.org.