

## Patient Education

# COVID-19 Vaccine

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The virus that causes COVID-19 comes from a family of viruses called Coronaviruses. These viruses cause the common cold, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). COVID-19 is caused by a virus that is closely related to the one that causes SARS. For this reason, scientists named the new virus SARS-CoV-2.

In March 2020, the World Health Organization named COVID-19 a global pandemic. A pandemic refers to a disease that has spread around the world and has had an impact on society. Because COVID-19 has affected so many people, researchers have been working to develop a vaccine as quickly as possible.

It can take years to develop a vaccine. But past research on SARS and MERS vaccines has helped researchers quickly develop the COVID-19 vaccines that are now available.

### WHY GET VACCINATED?

You get vaccines to prevent you from getting an illness. An example of this is the flu vaccine.

Vaccines help your body build up the ability to fight off a virus. A vaccine may not prevent you from getting the COVID-19 virus. But if you do get it, the vaccination may keep you from becoming seriously ill. Or it may keep you from developing complications due to the illness. And that may be a lifesaving benefit of the vaccine.

### VACCINE EFFECTIVENESS

COVID-19 spreads easily from person to person. It can cause severe illness or death. For these reasons, creating vaccines for COVID-19 have become a global health priority. Several vaccines are being tested. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorizes only vaccines shown to be safe and effective.

Several COVID-19 vaccines are being tested under strict guidelines. A few are meeting all requirements and receiving FDA authorization. These vaccines are more than 90% effective in preventing COVID-19 illness. That means that more than 90% of people who get the vaccine are protected from becoming seriously ill with the virus. Some vaccines are given in 2 doses at least 3 weeks apart. Some are given in 2 doses at least 4 weeks apart. Others may be given in a single dose.

Researchers do not know how long the vaccination offers protection. They also do not know whether people will need additional vaccine doses, called booster doses, to continue protection and reduce COVID-19 spread in communities.

### SIDE EFFECTS OF THE VACCINE

All medications have the risk of side effects or reactions. So far, no one receiving the COVID-19 vaccine has had serious side effects. The side effects, or reactions, of the COVID-19 vaccine are mild. Most reactions happen within the first few days after you get the vaccine and last no more than three days. Some people who received the vaccine reported the following reactions:

- Pain, redness or swelling where the shot was given
- Fever
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Chills
- Joint pain

### WHAT TO DO ABOUT SIDE EFFECTS

While many people do not have reactions after vaccination, it is normal if you do. It does not mean you have the COVID-19 infection. If you have a reaction, take some time to rest and allow your body to recover.

These reactions should not keep you from going to work or doing other activities. However, stay home if you have a fever. It is not necessary to have a COVID-19 test or to quarantine.

If you have reactions that prevent you from eating, sleeping or going to work, contact your health care provider. Also contact your health care provider if you have reactions that last longer than three days.



Signs of an allergic reaction include hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, and weakness. If you have any of these signs, call 9-1-1 or have someone drive you to the nearest emergency department.

#### WHO SHOULD BE VACCINATED?

A COVID-19 vaccine cannot be made fast enough to be available to everyone right away. The vaccine will be recommended first to health care personnel. As more vaccine doses become available, other high priority groups will become eligible to receive it. These include people who are at higher risk of severe complications if they get sick with COVID-19. Eventually the vaccine will be offered to all people.

At this time, the vaccine is not recommended for children younger than 16 years of age. This is because researchers do not know enough about how the vaccine can affect children.

The vaccine may not be recommended to those with certain health conditions. Talk to your health care provider if you have questions about receiving the vaccine.

#### PREVENTING COVID-19

The COVID-19 infection is preventable.

The COVID-19 virus most commonly spreads among people in close contact with one another. When an infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, talks, or breathes, the virus can be spread through droplets or small particles from their mouth or nose. You may get COVID-19 if you are in close contact with someone who is infected. Those infected may not show symptoms. Some may never develop symptoms.

You may also become infected if you touch surfaces or objects that have the virus on them and then touch your own mouth, nose or eyes. Evidence also shows that some particles can remain in the air after the infected person leaves the room.

#### SLOW THE SPREAD OF COVID-19



Wear a mask to cover your nose and mouth.



Stay at least 6 feet apart from other people.



Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 70% alcohol.



And you can get vaccinated.

You and others can be infected but not feel sick. When you take these actions, you protect yourself and those around you.

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Barbara Woodward Lips Patient Education Center

Mrs. Lips, a resident of San Antonio, Texas, was a loyal Mayo Clinic patient of more than 40 years and a self-made business leader who significantly expanded her family's activities in oil, gas and ranching. Upon her death in 1995, Mrs. Lips paid the ultimate compliment by leaving her entire estate to Mayo Clinic. By naming the Barbara Woodward Lips Patient Education Center, Mayo honors her generosity, her love of learning, her belief in patient empowerment and her dedication to high-quality care.

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