

COUNTY OF FRESNO
COVID-19 VACCINATIONS
Frequently Asked Questions
January 12, 2021

This Resource is designed to address questions related to the COVID-19 vaccine administration.

What are the benefits of getting vaccinated?

- Vaccination is an important tool to help stop the spread of coronavirus. It protects you and others by reducing infection and the spread of COVID-19. Together, the vaccine and other public health measures (like consistently wearing a face covering and physical distancing) will offer the best protection from COVID-19, reducing further spread so we can return to a more normal way of life. The two current vaccines for COVID have been shown to reduce the chances of getting sick from COVID by 95%! That means you are 20 times more likely to get COVID if you are not vaccinated compared to someone who is vaccinated. The COVID vaccines are much more effective than the influenza vaccines which are in the range of 50-70% effective.

How does the Vaccine work?

- Currently available vaccines that are approved by the FDA use messenger RNA technology to teach the body's own cells to produce antibodies to protect itself from the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The Moderna vaccine requires two doses over a 28-day period, the Pfizer vaccine requires two doses at least three weeks apart. The vaccine does not contain live viruses that could cause infection. They are rapidly broken down by the human body after injection and do not interact with or affect a person's DNA.

Is the Vaccine Safe?

- Vaccines in general have a long history of scientific study under rigorous conditions that has shown their safety and effectiveness. Vaccines are responsible for eliminating smallpox from the world, and preventing crippling diseases such as polio. The COVID vaccines went through a similar process including testing for effectiveness and safety in close to 50,000 individuals carefully documented trials, and review and approval by the FDA prior to their release. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) has an independent group of experts who review vaccine safety data and provide regular safety updates. Additionally, stringent controls are in place to ensure that shipped vaccines are stored correctly. To date, millions of individuals have received the vaccine with very few complications.

Are there any side effects?

- There may be mild short-term side effects after being vaccinated. This is a normal sign that your body is building protection. The most common side effects include pain, redness or swelling at the injection site, fatigue, headache, chills, muscle pain, joint pain and fever. To reduce any pain or discomfort where you got the shot, apply a cool washcloth over the area, use or exercise your arm, or take an over-the-counter pain reliever such as acetaminophen (Tylenol). To reduce discomfort from fever, drink plenty of fluids, dress lightly or take an over-the-counter fever reducer.

Will it protect against the new strains of COVID-19?

- FDA approved COVID-19 vaccines for emergency use in the U.S. are believed to be effective against all strains of the virus. The same health advice for protecting against COVID-19 – consistent use of face coverings, regular physical distancing, frequent handwashing, avoiding gatherings – apply for this strain as well. These safety protocols should be followed by individuals who receive the vaccine, while your body builds up immunity over time.

How many doses of vaccine will I need?

- For the Moderna vaccine, you will need to receive two doses, 28 days apart. It's very important to receive both doses. It takes time for your body to build protection after any vaccination and it may take up to two weeks after the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine to be fully protected.

What if I am unable to make it for my second dose at the required time?

- While it's recommended that people get their second dose of the Moderna vaccine within 28 days of the first dose, and Pfizer within 21 days, it is okay if you get the second dose later and a grace period of 4-6 days is considered acceptable. You will not need to start the whole regimen over again. You will get the full protection of the vaccine, even if it's longer than the recommended interval from the first dose.

How long will I be protected?

- Health experts are monitoring and evaluating health outcomes to get a better idea of how long the vaccine provides protection. It could be that the COVID-19 vaccine is like the measles vaccine and will offer lifetime protection, or it could be more like the flu vaccine and people will need to get vaccinated every year.

If I already had COVID-19, do I still need to be vaccinated?

- Yes. There is not enough information currently available to say if or for how long after infection someone is protected from getting re-infected with COVID-19 – this is called natural immunity. There is some indication that people can be infected twice, and even if the infected person is asymptomatic or has very mild symptoms, the virus can spread from an infected person to others. Persons with an active COVID-19 infection are recommended to wait until they are mostly or fully recovered before getting vaccinated.