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## INFORMATION/EDUCATION PAGE

### The COVID-19 Vaccine: Why Should I Get the Vaccines and the Boosters?



#### Understanding health risks and social effects of COVID-19

Since March 2020, the novel coronavirus virus (hereafter coronavirus) has resulted in more than 660 million cases and 6.6 million deaths globally. Not being vaccinated increases your risk for COVID-19, the disease caused by coronavirus.

According to the National Institutes of Health, even if you recover from COVID-19 in the short term, COVID-19 can

- damage vital organs (ie, lungs, heart, brain)
- increase your risk for COVID-19 long-term symptoms (ie, brain fog, a symptom similar to early dementia).<sup>1</sup>
- make you socially isolated and miss out on activities such as work, school, social activities. Participation in these activities is important for preserving mental health and overall well-being.
- make you end up in the emergency department for care.
- require a long hospital stay leading to high hospital and out-of-pocket medical bills.
- be costly for you, your family, and your community.

Specific examples that directly relate to cost include

- (1) public restrictions because of ongoing societal spread result in job loss
- (2) limited resources for childcare, and
- (3) increase need for community support to compensate for individual losses result in an overall societal cost.

The new sub-variants are more infectious and can spread faster than older variants of the original coronavirus. You may not have symptoms of COVID-19, but you still can carry the virus and spread it to other people and animals.<sup>2</sup> People with disabilities (PWD) may be at increased risk of contracting COVID-19 due to several reasons including limited mobility or inability to avoid coming into close contact with others who may be infected, need for close contact with personal attendants and caregivers, having trouble understanding information or practicing preventive measures, or inability to communicate symptoms of illness.<sup>3</sup>

#### Understanding COVID-19 Vaccine

- Three different COVID-19 vaccines produced by Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson, were approved in U.S. by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) after evaluation of the vaccine's safety and effectiveness in clinical trials that included diverse population PWD.<sup>4</sup>
- These vaccines and their boosters are a result of more than 40 years of biotechnological and virology advancements of global scientists working together.<sup>5</sup>
- All 3 vaccines with boosters are highly effective at preventing severe disease and death in adults of all ages, teens, and children 6 months old and older.<sup>6-9</sup>
- Unvaccinated persons were at much higher risk of dying from COVID-19 in comparison with those vaccinated (with or without a booster).

- The COVID-19 vaccines decrease your risk of having severe COVID-19 symptoms and lowers your chance of being hospitalized.<sup>7-9</sup>
- Fully vaccinated or those with up to 2 doses of vaccine are 14 times less likely to die of COVID-19, while those who receive the additional booster are 97 times less likely to die of COVID-19.<sup>6,7</sup>
- The virus is changing and the vaccine antibodies fade with time. Staying up-to-date with booster is important to help increase your own body's defenses against COVID-19.
- Boosters are recommended 6 months after you have been fully vaccinated.
- The COVID-19 vaccines are safe for all people 6 months old and older except for those with severe allergies to vaccines or components of the vaccines.

The misinformation about the vaccine on television and social media outlets can make you feel uncertain, scared, or vaccine hesitant.

- A big reason for 40% of the population to remain unvaccinated is false information spread on the internet.
- In 2021, a Kaiser Family Foundation report found about 80% of adults who say they will "definitely not" get the vaccine believe or are unsure about at least 1 prevailing COVID-19 vaccine myth.
- Additionally, a majority of adults (54%) either believe some rampant misinformation about the COVID-19 vaccines or are unable to debunk it.
- Fact checking (*such as checking the source and credentials of the person posting*) is a key strategy to verify the factual basis of the information.
- Our vaccine guide is based on scientific evidence to help you make the right choice regarding staying up-to-date with vaccines and boosters.

#### Common fears related to vaccine

- There is no evidence any vaccines cause fertility problems in women or men.

- However, getting COVID-19 can lead to male fertility problems, cause thyroid problems which can affect your menstrual cycle and fertility.
- Pregnant people who get COVID-19 experience higher risk of preterm birth, low birth weight, and stillbirth.

#### Interconnected benefits of being fully vaccinated for COVID-19 and staying up-to-date with boosters

##### Health/social benefits

1. The benefits of vaccination outweighs potential harms, even during pregnancy.<sup>10</sup>
2. Vaccinated pregnant mothers can transfer their antibodies and thus pass immunity to their babies, helping to protect them from COVID-19.<sup>11</sup>
3. The vaccine makes your immune system stronger and helps build resistance to the virus.
4. Getting vaccinated prevents you and others from the risk of severe disease hospitalizations and deaths.<sup>7-9</sup>
5. Because children are at risk for getting COVID-19 and for long-term health problems, the best way to keep your kids, 6 months and older safe is by getting them vaccinated.<sup>9</sup>

##### Historical, social/economic benefits

1. Vaccines have played a huge role to help eradicate other diseases such as smallpox from the world.
2. You can help stop the virus from spreading to other vulnerable people.
3. You can celebrate family occasions, partake in family holidays, public events with larger crowds, that is, sporting events and other fun activities safely. Know your community levels of COVID-19 before going to these activities. Some businesses and workplaces require vaccination proof or have mandates on staying up-to-date.
4. Partaking in recreational and social activities are important for overall well-being and may

protect against depression and social isolation.

5. The sooner a greater number of people are vaccinated, the better chance we have of keeping the new number of virus cases low in your community and return to work, school, travel, and eat in restaurants safely in-person which in turn can help our economy return to pre-COVID-19 era.

For continuous update and to avoid misinformation, please check the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) site at COVID-19 What's new and updated-19 What's new and updated. The CDC has updated [guidance for fully vaccinated people](#) based on new evidence.

### Where can I find a place to get my COVID-19 vaccine?

Currently, the vaccine is FREE and available for everyone 6 months old and older. Contact your doctor, and your local health department to find out where to get vaccines. Check the following websites:

- Learn how to find a COVID-19 vaccine near you as soon as you can.
- Vaccines.gov
- CVS.com
- Walgreens.com

### What should I expect after getting vaccinated?

- Getting a vaccine is fast. You may experience 1 or a combination of [side effects](#) such as a sore arm, feeling tired, headache, mild fever/chills after vaccination. Usually, these symptoms last 1-2 days.
- It generally takes 2 weeks after vaccination for the body to build protection against the coronavirus.
- Continue to practice good public health measures after the vaccine shot such as mask-wearing, hand washing hygiene with soap and water, social and physical distancing when indoors, and make sure your indoor spaces have good ventilation.

- The virus is always changing and generating new variants in different populations. Keep yourself protected from variants by getting the COVID-19 booster.
- Learn what you can do [when you have been fully vaccinated](#).

### Where can I find help after I get my vaccine?

- For COVID-19 vaccine aftercare visit.
- Use the BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment tool at <https://bc.thrive.health/covid19/en> if you experience ANY symptoms of COVID-19.
- Serious side effects (eg, blood clots or inflammation of the heart) after receiving the vaccine are rare. Seek urgent medical attention or call 9-1-1 if you develop any serious side effects or a severe allergic reaction (ie, hives, swelling of your face, tongue, or throat or difficulty breathing). Tell your doctor you have received a COVID-19 vaccine.

### Four simple ways to stay safe

1. Wear a mask. Consider an N95/KN95/N94 mask whenever possible as these protect by filtering out more virus.<sup>12</sup> Get your free mask at participating pharmacies: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/retail-pharmacy-program/participating-pharmacies.html>
2. Get fresh air!
3. Keep your distance.
4. Test for COVID-19 when you are feeling sick. It is still possible to get COVID-19 and pass it to others even if you are vaccinated. For free COVID-19 tests: <https://www.covidtests.gov/>

### Authorship

Preeti Pushpalata Zanwar, PhD, MPH, MS (*email address: [preeti.zanwar@jefferson.edu](mailto:preeti.zanwar@jefferson.edu)*); Comilla Sasson, MD, PhD; Patricia C. Heyn, PhD, FGSA, FACRM; Shanti M. Pinto, MD; Susan Magasi, PhD; Mark A. Hirsch, PhD, FACRM; Ahmed Negm, MD, MSc, PhD; and the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine (ACRM) Aging Research & Geriatric Rehabilitation Covid-19 & Frailty Task Force.

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