

COVID-19 Resources:



Addressing Vaccine Hesitancy

1.

There is no long-term safety information on the COVID vaccines. Is the vaccine really safe?

There is approximately one year of safety data on COVID vaccines. The CDC, along with many other groups, have determined that the COVID vaccines are safe and are the best protection against COVID. There are currently more safety data available on COVID vaccines than has been available for any other vaccine at the time of the vaccine's approval by the FDA.

Additionally, about 100,000 people (vaccinated and unvaccinated controls) were included in the U.S. authorized vaccine trials. All these trials were randomized, placebo-controlled trials that proved the vaccines to be safe and effective in protecting against COVID. As with all vaccines, there are risks. However, serious side effects from the COVID vaccine have been rare.

The benefits provided by the vaccines far outweigh the risks.

2.

If I've been infected, will a vaccine really help me?

Yes. For a while, we didn't know the value of vaccination for people who already had COVID. Now it is clear that vaccination offers enhanced protection for those already infected, with about a 50-fold increase in protective antibody levels for infected individuals undergoing vaccination and better protection against variants. A recent report from the U.S indicated 2-3 times reduced risk for infection for vaccinated people relative to those infected who are not vaccinated.

3.

If someone has allergies, including allergies to the flu vaccine, should they receive a COVID-19 vaccine?

Only those who have severe allergies to the components of the COVID-19 vaccines should not receive a COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccines contain polyethylene glycol, or PEG, which may cause an allergic reaction in some people.

If you have a history of severe allergic reactions, especially to vaccines, you should discuss your situation with your primary care provider before scheduling your vaccination appointment. However, a history of allergic reactions to other vaccines may not indicate an allergy to this one.

COVID-19 Resources: **Addressing Vaccine Hesitancy**

4. How effective are our currently available vaccines against the Delta variant?

The COVID-19 vaccines approved or authorized in the United States are highly effective at preventing severe disease and death, including against the Delta variant. But they are not 100% effective, and some fully vaccinated people will become infected (called a breakthrough infection) and experience illness. For all people, the vaccine provides the best protection against serious illness and death.

Fully vaccinated people with Delta variant breakthrough infections can spread the virus to others. However, vaccinated people appear to spread the virus for a shorter time. For prior variants, lower amounts of viral genetic material were found in samples taken from fully vaccinated people who had breakthrough infections than from unvaccinated people with COVID-19. For people infected with the Delta variant, similar amounts of viral genetic material have been found among both unvaccinated and fully vaccinated people. However, like prior variants, the amount of viral genetic material may go down faster in fully vaccinated people when compared to unvaccinated people. This means fully vaccinated people will likely spread the virus for less time than unvaccinated people.

5. If I am pregnant or planning to become pregnant, should I still receive a COVID-19 vaccine?

Women who are pregnant or are planning to become pregnant can receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and National Institutes of Health (NIH) have all determined that there is no scientific reason for the COVID-19 vaccines (or any vaccine) to affect fertility in men and women.

There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 vaccination causes any problems with pregnancy, the development of the placenta, or fertility. Additionally, proximity to those who have received a COVID-19 vaccination will not affect menstrual cycles. Research into the tens of thousands of pregnant people who have received a COVID-19 vaccine found that they have not experienced adverse outcomes – such as preterm birth or pregnancy loss – any more frequently than pregnant people studied before the pandemic. Unfortunately, pregnant people were excluded from the vaccine trials. However, key data available since vaccines were approved in December 2020 include:

- To date, more than 135,000 pregnant people have self-reported within the CDC v-safe program and side effects have been similar to the general public.
- More than 5,000 of these people who received a vaccine while pregnant have been followed in a registry for birth outcomes.
- More than 800 people have delivered (including multiple vaccinated people who work at UNC Health) and adverse pregnancy outcomes were the same as background rates among the general pregnant population.

Finally, none of the COVID-19 vaccines contain the live virus that causes COVID-19, so a COVID-19 vaccine cannot make anyone sick with COVID-19, including pregnant people or their babies.

As always, you are encouraged to discuss your personal situation and concerns with your health care provider.

COVID-19 Resources: **Addressing Vaccine Hesitancy**

6.

Can vaccinated individuals still spread COVID-19?

Yes, if you have been infected with COVID-19 you can spread the virus to others – even if you have been vaccinated and are asymptomatic.

7.

What should the FDA approval tell us about the safety of the vaccine?

The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine was studied in 44,000 people and demonstrated 91% efficacy in preventing COVID-19 disease. At this time, more than 92 million US residents have received the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, and 6-month safety data indicate a high degree of safety for this vaccine. Many drugs approved for use in the US are studied in as few as 2,000 people; this demonstrates that Pfizer-BioNTech did not take shortcuts when collecting safety and efficacy data. The full study process was followed and was able to be achieved in such a short time because of the resources made available to address the public health crisis.

8.

Is there any guidance on whether the yearly flu vaccine can be given at or around the same time as the COVID vaccine?

The data shows us that there is no problem getting the flu shot at or near the same time as the COVID vaccine. The vaccines save lives and keep people from getting sicker.