



# Plain Language COVID Vaccine Information

## **What is the COVID vaccine?**

The COVID vaccine is a new medication that can prevent you from getting sick with “COVID,” “the Coronavirus,” or “COVID-19.” This vaccine helps protect your body so you don’t get sick with COVID. It works by boosting your immune system. This helps the body fight COVID.

The vaccine is given as a shot in your arm. You need to get 2 shots for the vaccine to work. The second shot is given 3 or 4 weeks after the first shot.

Right after the vaccination, some people’s arms hurt. Other people get sore muscles, a headache, a fever, or a sore throat that lasts a day or two. Some people do not get any side effects.

After the second shot, it is unlikely that you will be able to catch COVID.

## **Who can get the vaccine and when?**

In December 2020 and January 2021, there are not enough vaccines for everyone in California. Doctors, scientists, and government leaders have worked together to decide who can get the vaccine.

Health care workers will get the vaccine first so they can keep taking care of people who are sick. Next, people who might get really sick from COVID will be able to get the vaccine. This includes many people with developmental disabilities. In California, that will be in Spring or Summer 2021.

The vaccine is going to be given in different places, such as pharmacies, hospitals, or special clinics. You might not have a choice about where to get it or who gives it to you. That is because there is not enough for everyone yet. Your service provider or doctor can tell you how your vaccine will be given.

## **Do I have to get the COVID vaccine?**

It is your decision whether to get the vaccine or not. It is up to you to make the best choice for your health, and that may or may not be getting the vaccine.

If you have a person who makes your health decisions for you, talk with them about how you feel about getting the vaccine. Your health care provider or doctor can also answer your questions.

## **How does the COVID vaccine work?**

A vaccine works by giving your body tools to fight viruses that can make you sick.

Those tools are called “antibodies.” Antibodies are used by your immune system to fight off viruses. Each type of virus has its own type of antibodies. That is why vaccines only work for one type of illness.

This vaccine uses a new type of technology called mRNA that teaches our bodies to fight off the coronavirus.

## **Is the COVID vaccine safe?**

Scientists believe the COVID vaccine is generally safe. It is still new. There is a lot of information that scientists are still learning.

If you have questions or are worried about how the COVID vaccine may impact you, talk to your doctor or health care professional. Talk to the person who knows your health the best and who knows about the vaccine.

## **I have heard scary things about this vaccine.**

There are a lot of rumors about this vaccine that are simply not true. To find out what is true, it is a good idea to talk to someone who knows the facts, like a health care professional.

## **How can I make a good decision about getting or not getting the vaccine?**

Many people think about what might be good about taking the vaccine and what might not be good. Some questions you can think about:

- Do you have a condition that makes it more likely for you to become very sick from COVID?
- Do you live with, work with, or spend time with someone who is likely to become very sick from COVID?

Health problems like diabetes, heart disease, and cancer can increase your risk from COVID. Having Down Syndrome or living in a group home can increase your risk from COVID.

If you are not sure if you are at high risk, you can ask your doctor or health care provider. You can also talk to your doctor or health care provider about what the best things are for you to think about when making this decision.