



WAYNE MEMORIAL  
HOSPITAL

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## DOSE # 2 & MORE VACCINE QUESTIONS

### **I hear the second dose causes more side effects, is that true?**

It depends on the individual, but be prepared. Both Pfizer and Moderna report some people experience side effects from the second dose that are significant enough to prevent them from going about their daily routine. These range from a bad headache and chills to body aches, fever, nausea, a rash and “brain fog.” They usually show up eight-10 hours after vaccination and resolve within 24-36 hours. If you have not received your second dose yet, bear all this in mind in terms of your work or family schedule.

Side effects may not be pleasant, but they are a good sign that your own immune system is working. *But, if you don't have side effects after your shot, be glad you are one of the lucky ones and don't worry.*

### **Do I need to get the vaccine if I've already had COVID-19?**

Yes. It's safe, and probably even beneficial, for anyone who has had COVID to get the vaccine at some point, experts said. Although people who have contracted the virus are believed to have at least some natural immunity, it is too soon to know how long it lasts. People who have had COVID are advised to wait about 90 days after infection before getting the shot.

### **If I've been vaccinated do I still need to wear a mask?**

Yes, for two reasons. First, it takes awhile for the vaccine's protection to kick in. In fact, you are still vulnerable to catching COVID for about two weeks after your second dose. Second, once you're fully vaccinated, there's a concern you might still carry the virus. While you may not get sick, you can sneeze or breathe the virus on to other people. Researchers are hopeful that vaccinated people won't spread the virus, but more research is needed. So, you still need to wear a mask in public spaces.

### **If I'm vaccinated, and all my friends and family are vaccinated, can we hang out together without masks?**

Yes – and no. There are precautions to consider before removing your mask. First, the vaccines give you about 95% protection, but there's still that 5% which may be critical for particularly vulnerable people—such as the immunocompromised and the elderly. They could pick it up from you—theoretically—despite their own vaccinations. The likelihood of you getting the virus (despite the vaccine) depends partly on the level of the epidemic in your community. Right now in many parts of our service area, it is still very high. When the virus is raging, a 5% risk of infection is significant.

### **Is there a risk my state will run out of the vaccine before I get my second dose?**

Health officials appear confident that everyone who needs a second dose will get it, although high demand and supply bottlenecks could mean your second dose is delayed. Although ideally you should get your second dose within three to four weeks of the first dose (depending on which vaccine you were given), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now says patients may extend the interval between doses to six weeks if getting the second dose sooner is “not feasible.”

### **Can I get my second dose with a different vaccine—i.e. can I mix and match vaccines?**

In most cases, health workers will not give you a different second dose than the one indicated on your vaccination card. The general rule of thumb is the vaccines should not be mixed. While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently updated its guidance, allowing doctors to mix and match the two mRNA vaccines between doses “in exceptional situations,” other agencies such as the Food & Drug Administration caution there is not enough data –yet – to support mixing and matching.

### **What happens if I contract the virus between the first and second dose?**

Because the vaccine takes a few weeks to start working and requires two doses, it’s still possible to catch COVID-19 while you’re waiting for your booster shot. A few people have reportedly become COVID-positive after their first shot, but it’s not known when they picked up the virus-- before the shot or before the shot’s immunity kicked in. If you develop COVID-19 after the first dose, you should still plan on getting the second dose on schedule, but check with your doctor first. And remember, even after two doses, no vaccine offers 100 % protection. Even if you do catch the virus after vaccination, it's likely that you will experience mild illness because your body has antibodies ready to fight off the virus.

### **I’ve heard that taking a pain reliever after getting a COVID-vaccine could erode its effectiveness. Is that true?**

Most experts agree it’s safe to take a pain reliever or fever reducer like acetaminophen or ibuprofen to relieve discomfort *after* you get vaccinated if you have developed side effects. You shouldn’t try to stave off discomfort by taking a pain reliever before getting the shot; some experts say that may even lower the immunity effects of the vaccine. But neither Pfizer nor Moderna offers guidance about taking pain relievers to treat side effects. It is recommended that you hydrate—drink plenty of fluids and call your healthcare provider if injection site redness and/or pain worsens after 24 hours.

### **How long will the vaccine last? Will I need another one next year?**

That is to be determined. It’s possible that COVID-19 vaccinations will become an annual event, just like the flu shot. Or it may be that the benefits of the vaccine last longer than a year. We have to wait to see how durable the protection from the vaccines is.

### **How will we know when things are getting better?**

When case counts start dropping and the test positivity rate in every state drops below 5 %, we’ll know things are looking up. The test positivity rate is the %age of overall tests given in a community that come back positive. The lower the number, the fewer new cases and the less likely you are to cross paths with someone who has the virus.

### **When will it be safe to do things like go to the movies or the theater again?**

Public health officials estimate that between 70 to 85 % of the population needs to be vaccinated before people can start moving freely again in society. If things go well, life could get a lot better by late spring and early summer. A lot will depend on the public’s willingness to get the vaccine. While vaccine hesitancy remains a concern, there are signs that confidence in the vaccine is rising in the United States and around the world.

### **Why not take my chances with COVID-19 rather than get a vaccine?**

COVID-19 is by far the more dangerous option. COVID vaccines carry little known risk. But the perils of COVID-19 have been well documented. About 20 % of people who come down with COVID-19 symptoms develop serious, potentially life-threatening illness. Although people who are older, obese or have other health problems are at highest risk for complications from COVID-19, younger people can become severely ill, too. In a study of more than 3,000 people ages 18 to 34 who were hospitalized for COVID, 20 % required intensive care and 3 % died. The long-term health complications associated with COVID-19 are a serious concern. As many as one in three people who recover from COVID have chronic complaints for months afterward.