COVID-19 vaccines are available in North Carolina to everyone ages 6 months and older.

- The vaccine is free everywhere in North Carolina.
- No government ID or insurance is required.
- Depending on where you get your vaccine or booster, you may need to make an appointment.
- Everyone can be vaccinated and boosted, regardless of their immigration status. Getting vaccinated and boosted will not affect your immigration status.

To find a vaccine provider near you, visit [MySpot.nc.gov](http://MySpot.nc.gov).

**IN THIS DOCUMENT**
- Getting Your Vaccine and Booster
- Why You Should Get a COVID-19 Vaccine
- One-dose Versus Two-dose Vaccines
- Vaccine Safety
- After Your Vaccination
- Government Data and Privacy
- The Science Behind the Vaccines

**GETTING YOUR VACCINE AND BOOSTER**

**Do I need an ID card to get a vaccine or booster?**

You do not need an ID card, like a driver's license, to get a vaccine or a booster. You cannot be turned away if you don't have an ID. Vaccine providers can use other ways to make sure they are giving the vaccine to the right person. They may ask you to pre-register or fill out a form with your name, address, and date of birth. Or you may be asked to show a utility bill or other document with your name and address on it. You may be asked for your health insurance, but it's OK if you don't have it. Vaccines and boosters are always free to the patient.

**Can I get a vaccine or booster in a county I don't live in?**

Yes. You can get a vaccine or booster for free anywhere, no matter where you live.

**Can non-U.S. citizens get the vaccine and booster?**

Yes. COVID-19 vaccines and boosters are free to everyone. You don't need to have health insurance. Your immigration status or where you live do not matter, and you should not be asked about it. Your information is secure and can't be given to ICE for immigration enforcement. Getting the vaccine and booster does not impact your immigration status. Learn more from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

**How much do the vaccines and boosters cost?**

Nothing. COVID-19 vaccines and boosters are free to everyone. You don't need to have health insurance. If you have health insurance, it will pay for 100% of the vaccine or booster. If you don't have health insurance, you won't be charged for the vaccine or booster.
You may have heard that the federal government is no longer reimbursing vaccine providers for COVID-19 vaccine-related costs for people who don’t have insurance. While this is true, vaccine providers cannot pass these costs on to you. COVID-19 vaccines and boosters will still be free for all those wanting to receive them.

You cannot be denied a vaccine because you can’t pay or don’t have health insurance. If you get a bill following your COVID-19 vaccine or booster, you should first speak with the person or facility that sent it. If they don’t cancel it, call the NC COVID-19 Vaccine Help Center at 888-675-4567.

**Are children able to get the vaccine?**

Yes. Children ages 6 months and older should get a COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccine is available for free even without insurance and regardless of immigration status. Vaccines can help keep children from getting seriously sick even if they do get COVID-19. Vaccinating children can also help protect family members. This includes siblings who can’t be vaccinated yet and family members who may be more likely to get very sick. Data on the COVID-19 vaccine in children has shown it works well and there are no safety concerns.

**Children 12 to 17 Years:** The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine in people ages 16 years and older. On May 10, 2021, the FDA authorized the Pfizer vaccine for children ages 12 to 15 years old. This age group receives the same dose as those who are 16 and older. Hundreds of thousands of children have received the vaccine. On June 23, 2022, the Moderna vaccine was authorized for children 6 to 17 years old. Children 12 to 17 receive the same dose as adults.

**Children 5 to 11 Years:** On Oct. 29, 2021, a smaller dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine was authorized for children ages 5 to 11 years for both their initial vaccines and booster shot. This authorization was based on clinical trials with more than 3,000 children ages 5 to 11. Volunteers included people from different races and ethnicities. On June 23, 2022, the Moderna vaccine was authorized for children 6 to 17 years, with individuals 6 to 11 years old getting a smaller dose than those 12 and older.

**Children 6 months through 4 years (through 5 years for Moderna):** On June 17, 2022, the FDA authorized Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines for use in children 6 months though 5 years. The Pfizer vaccine was authorized for children ages 6 months through 4 years. The Moderna vaccine was authorized for children 6 months through 5 years. For Pfizer, these authorizations were based on clinical trials, including a study with 1,678 children ages 6 months through 4 years. Moderna’s clinical trials included more than 6,600 children ages 6 months through 5 years. Now parents and caregivers have a choice for vaccinating their young kids.

If your child tests positive for COVID-19 after their first shot, wait until their isolation period ends before getting the second shot (at least three weeks after the first dose). For kids over 12 years who do not have a weakened immune system, can wait up to eight weeks for the second shot.

Ask your child’s doctor if there are other vaccines your child might need to keep them healthy.

**What is the guidance for children who have compromised immune systems?**

The CDC recommends that people over the age of 6 months who have moderately or severely compromised immune systems should receive a three-dose primary vaccine series. In most cases, all three doses should be the same vaccine. Your health care provider will advise if a different vaccine type is appropriate. Those who receive Pfizer as a primary series should get a third dose at least eight weeks after their second shot. People getting Moderna should obtain the third dose at least four weeks after the second shot. Children 5 and older should get boosted. The number and timing of boosters depends on which vaccine brand they initially received and their age at time of vaccination. The Pfizer or Moderna vaccines are preferred for booster doses. Children and teens under 18 who get the Moderna vaccine should not receive any booster at this time. Children ages 5 to 11 who have moderately or severely compromised immune systems who get the Pfizer vaccine should get a single Pfizer booster at least three months after the third shot for a total of four doses. Children ages 12 to 17 with compromised immune systems who get the Pfizer vaccine should get a second Pfizer booster four months or more after their first. Talk with a health care provider if you have questions about whether a booster is right for your child.
Why should I get my teenager vaccinated?

COVID-19 vaccines can help our children get back to the fuller lives they had before the pandemic. The tested, safe, and effective COVID-19 vaccines are available for teens 12 and older. Getting vaccinated helps keep students and teachers in the classroom.

Young people can get the virus just like everyone else. Getting them vaccinated is the best way to protect them, prevent the spread of COVID-19, and protect others. In North Carolina, more than 509,000 children ages 0 to 17 years old have tested positive for COVID-19. It is also the best way to protect others in the house who can’t get vaccinated.

Millions of people have already received this vaccine. It is safe and works well in preventing serious illness, hospitalization, and death.

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D88q-Yp55tw

Is the vaccine safe for children and teenagers?

Yes, the COVID-19 vaccine is safe and works well in children and teens. Millions of children and teens in the United States have received COVID-19 vaccines under the most intense safety monitoring in U.S. history. Tens of millions of adults have also received the vaccine. Safety data from more than 298 million shots was collected in the first six months after the vaccines became available in the U.S. The data shows the most common side effects were mild and only lasted a few days.

Like adults, children and teens may have some temporary side effects from the vaccine. These may include a sore arm, feeling tired or achy for a day or two, headaches, or a fever. These are normal and good signs that their body is building protection. These symptoms should go away in a few days.

Parents and caregivers can enroll their child or teen in v-safe. V-safe is a free tool you can use on a smartphone for personalized health check-ins. Through v-safe, you can report any side effects your child or teenager may have after their vaccine.

There is no data that suggests COVID-19 vaccines affect unborn children or pregnancies.

Children and teens can get vaccines to help keep them safe from other illnesses at the same time as their COVID-19 vaccine.

Why should I get my younger child vaccinated?

Like teenagers, vaccines can help our children get back to fuller lives with healthier and happier experiences. Children can get the virus just like everyone else. COVID-19 cases in children can result in hospitalization, death, MIS-C (inflammation in different parts of the body), and long-term problems where symptoms can last for months. Recent research shows that vaccination lowers the chance of having these severe and long-term effects from COVID-19 infection.

New research has also shown that two shots of the smaller dose Pfizer vaccine lower the risk of MIS-C by 91%. Additionally, 95% of kids hospitalized with MIS-C are unvaccinated, and some require life support. They can also have lasting damage to the heart, kidneys, or other organs.

With the Omicron variant, COVID-19 cases reached their highest amount in children in the U.S. compared to earlier versions of the virus. This included large increases in hospitalizations across the country. One in four infants and young children who were hospitalized needed ICU care. Fortunately, kids who are 6 months and older can get the COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccines are safe and help protect young children from COVID-19. Getting younger kids vaccinated also helps protect others in the house who can’t. Most kids 5 and older should get a booster. Those who are NOT immunocompromised can get it at least four months after the date of their most recent COVID-19 vaccine. Kids who have compromised immune systems should get a booster at least three months after their most recent shot.
You cannot be charged for the vaccine. It is free, even if you don’t have insurance and regardless of immigration status. Kids 6 months of age and older can get a vaccine anywhere that has the age-appropriate dose of Pfizer or Moderna available.

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0NUTeqrZI48

**Which vaccine should my child under 6 years get?**

The CDC recommends the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine for everyone 6 months and older. Both vaccines help protect children from COVID-19.

For children under 6, the Pfizer vaccine was authorized for ages 6 months through 5 years; children aged 5 should receive the two-dose vaccine initially, plus a booster, and those under 5 should receive a three-dose vaccine initially. For this age group, the Moderna vaccine was authorized for children ages 6 months through 5 years and is currently a two-dose vaccine. Children and teens under 18 who get the Moderna vaccine should not receive any booster at this time. The number of doses and boosters children are eligible for may differ if they have moderately or severely compromised immune systems.

Modern and Pfizer continue to collect data on effectiveness, as well as the need for additional doses or boosters. Both vaccine brands are available for kids 6 months and up, and your family may have a choice. Talk to a medical provider to learn more about which option is right for your family.

**Should I wait for the larger vaccine dose if my child is turning 5 soon?**

No, do not wait. The effectiveness of the smaller dose for young children is comparable to the effectiveness of the larger dose for older children. You should get your child vaccinated as soon as possible.

**Can children get a mix of both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine for their doses?**

COVID-19 vaccines are not interchangeable. Except under certain circumstances, children should receive the same vaccine brand for all recommended doses. In the unusual case that a child gets two different brands of vaccines for the first two doses they should get a third dose of either vaccine eight weeks after their second to finish their primary vaccine series. Your vaccine provider can determine if a mixed series is appropriate for your child.

**Where can I find more guidance about back-to-school safety?**

The updated StrongSchoolsNC website offers guidance from public health experts on how to keep our students safe in schools. Currently, the best tools we have are vaccines, boosters, masks, and getting tested. This guidance will be updated based on new research.

**Do kids under 18 need their parent or guardian’s permission to get a COVID-19 vaccine or booster?**

It depends. Anyone 15 years old or younger needs a parent or guardian’s permission to get any COVID-19 vaccines or boosters. People who are 16 or 17 years old don’t need permission to get the first two doses of the Pfizer vaccine, but they do need permission to get a booster. People who are 17 or younger need written consent to get any Moderna vaccine, as it is still under EUA. Kids and teens who have moderately or severely compromised immune systems need permission to get an additional dose.

Parents or legal guardians need to give their permission in writing. It can't be given over the phone or through email.

**I am a teenager. Where can I find more information for me, my friends, and family about the COVID-19 vaccine?**

You can find helpful information, tools, and resources about the benefits of COVID-19 vaccines at TeenVaxFacts.com.
How can I get my entire family vaccinated at the same time?

There are many ways to get your family vaccinated together.

Most vaccine providers will let you sign up for vaccine appointments. You can schedule appointments for all members of your family. Many vaccine providers also offer walk-in vaccinations. People in a family can show up together for these walk-in clinics.

Because the dose and brand of COVID-19 vaccine you get may be different depending on each family member’s age, it is important to make sure the provider you choose has the right ones available. Babies and toddlers ages 6 months through 2 years cannot be vaccinated by a pharmacist. They can get their vaccine only at a doctor’s office or local health center where the correct dose for their age is available.

All children are encouraged to get the vaccine from their health care provider, as the vaccine may be given with other routine childhood vaccines or regular checkups that help to keep them healthy. Parents and guardians of children who do not have an established health care provider can visit MySpot.nc.gov to search for a nearby vaccine provider. They are also encouraged to contact their local health department. Parental consent is required.

Many places in North Carolina offer COVID-19 vaccines specifically for children and their families. Visit MySpot.nc.gov for more information about how vaccines work and where you can find an appointment near you. You can also call the NC COVID-19 Vaccine Help Center at 888-675-4567 to help you make an appointment. It is open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on weekdays and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekends.

How can I avoid missing work to get my vaccine or booster?

Many places will let you schedule vaccine appointments on the weekends or in the evenings. Many places also allow walk-ins.

You may have temporary side effects after getting vaccinated. This could include a sore arm, fever, or feeling tired or achy for a day or two. This can be normal and shows that the vaccine is working to give your body protection against COVID-19. NCDHHS is encouraging employers to give employees paid time off to get a vaccine or to rest if they have temporary side effects. If you don’t have paid time off or find it difficult to miss work, we encourage getting vaccinated right before a day off.

Can I get a ride to my vaccine visit?

Yes, there are several free transportation options to get vaccinated:

- Call your local transit authority for a free ride to your vaccine appointment. You may need to call in advance to schedule a ride.
- Ask your vaccine provider about transportation options.

Can I be vaccinated or boosted at home because of limited mobility?

People who have limited mobility can be vaccinated against COVID-19 in their home. To find a vaccine provider in your area who can give the vaccine to people in their home, call the At-Home Vaccination Hotline at 1-866-303-0026. You can also fill out a registration form. More information on at-home vaccination.

When am I up to date with my COVID-19 vaccines?

You are up to date on your vaccines when you have been given all of the vaccines and boosters that are recommended for you based on your age and current health.

- Children ages 6 months through 4 years are up to date if:
  - They have healthy immune systems and got three shots of the lower-dose Pfizer vaccine or two shots of the lower-dose Moderna vaccine (for children 6 months through 5 years).
- Children ages 5 to 11 years who get the Pfizer vaccine are up to date if:
- They have healthy immune systems and got two shots of the lower-dose Pfizer vaccine and it’s too soon for them to get a booster or
- They received two shots of the lower-dose Pfizer vaccine and a Pfizer booster five months after their last shot.

- **Children ages 6 to 11 years who get the Moderna vaccine are up to date if:**
  - They got two shots of the lower-dose Moderna vaccine. Children and teens under 18 who get the Moderna vaccine should not receive any booster at this time.

- **People ages 12 to 49 years are up to date if:**
  - They have healthy immune systems and got two shots of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or one shot of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and it’s too soon for them to get a booster, or
  - They got two shots of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or one shot of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and a booster five months after their last shot, or
  - They got two shots of the Novavax vaccine.
  - People who got the Johnson & Johnson vaccine AND the Johnson & Johnson booster can get a second booster of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, but it’s not needed to be up to date.
  - Children and teens under 18 who get the Moderna vaccine should not get any booster at this time.

- **People ages 50 years and older are up to date if:**
  - They have healthy immune systems and got two shots of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or one shot of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and it’s too soon for them to get a booster, or
  - They got two shots of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or one shot of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and a booster five months after their last shot. or
  - They got two shots of the Novavax vaccine.
  - A second booster is also needed for people ages 50 and older who got Pfizer, Moderna, or Johnson & Johnson for their initial vaccine to be up to date. People who get the Novavax vaccine should not get any booster at this time.

- For people who have moderately or severely compromised immune systems, there are a few differences to remember:
  - Children ages 6 months through 4 years who got the Pfizer vaccine should get their second shot three weeks after the first. They should get their third shot at least four weeks after their second.
  - Children ages 6 months through 5 years who got the Moderna vaccine should get their second shot four weeks after their first and the third shot at least four weeks later.
  - Children ages 5 to 11 years who have moderately or severely compromised immune systems are up to date when they have gotten three shots of the lower-dose Pfizer vaccine or three shots of the lower-dose Moderna vaccine (for kids 6 to 11 years old). This age group should also get a Pfizer booster at least three months after their third vaccine (four shots total) if they got the Pfizer vaccine series. If they get the Moderna vaccine, they should not get any booster.
  - People ages 12 years and older who have moderately or severely compromised immune systems and got the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine are up to date when they have received three vaccine shots and TWO booster shots (five shots total). Children and teens under 18 who get the Moderna vaccine should not get any booster at this time.
  - The CDC recommends that most people who have moderately or severely compromised immune systems and who are 18 years and older get a Pfizer or Moderna booster shot. People ages 5 to 17 can only get the Pfizer booster after getting the Pfizer vaccine series.
  - People with compromised immune systems are also up to date after they have received three vaccine doses but are not yet able to get their first or second booster shot because it’s too soon. People in this group should get their first booster three months after their third shot. They should get their second booster at least four months after their first booster.
  - People ages 18 years and older who have moderately or severely compromised immune systems and got the one-shot Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine are up to date when they:
    - Get a second shot of either the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, and
▪ Get TWO boosters when they are able
  o People who get the Novavax vaccine should not get any booster at this time.

People in this group will get a total of four shots. They are also up to date after they get their second (additional) shot if they can’t get their boosters yet. People in this group should get their first booster two months after their second shot. They should get their second booster at least four months after their first booster.

Do I need an additional dose?

According to the CDC, if you have a weakened immune system, you are at increased risk of severe COVID-19 illness and death. Additionally, your immune response to COVID-19 vaccination may not be as strong as in people who are not immunocompromised. People 6 months and older receive three doses of vaccine for their primary series. The timing and need for additional or booster doses depend on a person’s age and which vaccine they received. Detailed information on COVID-19 vaccines for people with compromised immune systems can be found here on the CDC’s website.

Do I need a booster shot?

It is important to stay up to date on your vaccines by getting the boosters recommended for you based on your age and current health condition when you are able. During the recent Omicron surge, those who were boosted were 21 times less likely to die from COVID-19 compared to those who were unvaccinated. They were also seven times less likely to be hospitalized. People who got the Johnson & Johnson vaccine should get the Pfizer or Moderna booster if they can.

Boosters are recommended for everyone 5 years and older to strengthen their protection against COVID-19. The risk of severe COVID-19 is higher for people who have other health conditions. COVID-19 vaccines and boosters are important, especially if you are older or have a lot of severe health conditions. You should get a booster if:

- You are 5 to 17 and got your second shot of the Pfizer vaccine at least FIVE months ago.
- You are 18 or older and got your second shot of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine at least FIVE months ago.
- You are 18 or older and got your Johnson & Johnson vaccine at least TWO months ago.

People ages 5 to 17 years old should only get the Pfizer booster after receiving the Pfizer vaccine series; children and teens under 18 who get the Moderna vaccine should not receive any booster at this time. Adults 18 and older should get the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine for their booster.

The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is only available to adults who are allergic to the other vaccines, can’t access the other vaccines, or who would not get vaccinated or boosted if they are unable to get the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. A booster is needed sooner if you have a compromised immune system.

People who are over 50 years should also get a second booster of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine. Adults who get the Novavax vaccine should not get any booster at this time, no matter their age. People who are 12 years or older and have a moderately or severely compromised immune system should also get a second booster, depending on their age and the vaccine they get. These second boosters should be given at least four months after the first.

People who were recently sick with COVID-19 may wait to get their first or second booster shot for three months after symptoms or after testing positive if they didn’t have symptoms. Studies have shown that a longer time between infection and vaccination may improve your body’s immune response to the vaccine. Also, a low risk of reinfection has been seen in the weeks to months following infection.

Adults ages 18 and older who received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine for both their first vaccine and booster can also choose to get a second booster of either Pfizer or Moderna, but this isn’t required to be considered up to date. You may find COVID-19 booster shots at your health care provider, pharmacies, and other locations. You do not need to get your shots all at the same place. Also, the location does not need to have the same vaccine brand as
your first shot. Speak with a doctor, nurse, or pharmacist if you have questions about what booster is right for you. Visit MySpot.nc.gov to find a vaccine provider near you.

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwFOdFiiUo8

Do I need a second booster shot?

People who should get a second booster of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine include:

- Adults age 50 years or older who got their first booster at least four months ago. Adults who get the Novavax vaccine should not get any booster at this time.
- People age 12 and older with moderately or severely compromised immune systems who got their first booster shot at least four months ago. Children and teens under 18 who get the Moderna vaccine should not receive any booster at this time.

Adults who got a total of two shots of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine at least four months ago can also get a second booster of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, but it is not required for them to be considered up to date on their vaccines.

These people can get a second booster because they are at higher risk of getting very sick.

Getting a second booster may be especially important for people over the age of 65. It may also be important for people who have other health conditions that make them more likely to get very sick.

Talk with a health care provider if you have questions about whether a second booster is right for you.

Should I get my second booster now or wait until later?

People who get a second booster now might still need more boosters later this year. However, it may be helpful to get it now if you are (or if someone you live with is):

- Moderately or severely immunocompromised
- Over the age of 50
- More likely to get very sick from COVID-19
- More likely to be exposed to COVID-19 through your job, where you live, or other factors (such as frequent travel or large gatherings)
- In an area with medium to high COVID-19 community levels
- Living with someone who is not vaccinated

You may consider waiting to get a second booster if you:

- Had COVID-19 in the past three months
- Feel that getting a second booster now would make you not want to get another booster later

A second booster may be more important in the fall of 2022. It may also be important if a new vaccine for a future COVID-19 variant becomes available.

Why might more COVID-19 booster shots be needed?

Research continues to show that vaccines and boosters:

- Are safe and work well; and,
- Protect people from getting very sick, being hospitalized, and dying from COVID-19.

During the recent Omicron surge, people who had gotten their booster were 21 times less likely to die from COVID-19 compared to those who had not been vaccinated. They were also seven times less likely to be hospitalized. Early data show that a second booster shot may protect people even more from getting very sick from COVID-19.
A second booster is recommended for people who are 50 years or older or have a moderately or severely compromised immune system.

**If I get a second booster shot now, will I be able to get another one this fall?**

The FDA and CDC will continue to talk about whether everyone may need another booster. Currently, second boosters are only recommended for certain people who are at higher risk of getting very sick. People who get a second booster now may still need more boosters later this year. In the meantime, people who are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19 have the option to increase their protection now.

**Which booster should I get if I got the Johnson & Johnson vaccine?**

Most adults can get either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine for their booster. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine and booster is only available to adults who are allergic to the other vaccines, can’t access the other vaccines, or who would not get vaccinated if they are unable to get the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Additionally, adults who have had a total of two shots of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine at least four months ago can choose to get a second booster of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine. A Johnson & Johnson vaccine cannot be used as a second booster. A second booster is not needed for these people to be considered up to date on their vaccines unless you have a moderately or severely compromised immune system. Speak with a health care provider if you have questions about which booster is right for you.

**I received a vaccine brand in another country that is not authorized in the United States. Can I get a booster of one of the three available brands?**

COVID-19 vaccines that are NOT authorized or approved by the FDA OR listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization (WHO) do not count toward vaccination in the U.S. You should restart your series of vaccines with an FDA-approved vaccine at least 28 days after your last shot. You should also get a Pfizer or Moderna booster five months after you get your vaccine(s).

If you got a COVID-19 vaccine listed for emergency use by the WHO but that is not approved or authorized by the FDA, you should get a Pfizer or Moderna booster shot at least five months after your last vaccine. If you have a moderately or severely compromised immune system, you may need an additional shot and a booster shot even earlier. Learn more about boosters and additional doses.

Speak with a health care provider if you have questions.

**How long after receiving a booster shot am I considered boosted?**

You are considered “boosted” and up to date right after your final booster shot. A first or second booster shot doesn’t take two weeks to help protect you from COVID-19 because your first shot(s) have already built up some immunity.

**If a person with a compromised immune system already got an additional dose, do they still need to get a booster shot?**

During the recent Omicron surge, people who had gotten their booster were 21 times less likely to die from COVID-19 compared to people who had not been vaccinated. They were also seven times less likely to be hospitalized.

- People 12 to 17 with moderately or severely compromised immune systems who got an additional dose of Pfizer or 18 and older who got an additional dose of Pfizer or Moderna should get a booster shot at least three months after their additional dose. They should also get a second booster of the age-appropriate mRNA vaccine at least four months after the first.
- Children 5 to 11 with moderately or severely compromised immune systems should now get a booster three months after their third shot. Second boosters are not recommended for children ages 5 to 11 at this time, and boosters are not currently recommended for children under 5.
- Children and teens under 18 who get the Moderna vaccine should not receive any booster at this time.
• People 18 years of age and older can get the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine for their booster dose. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is only available to those who are allergic to the other vaccines, can’t access the other vaccines, or who would not get vaccinated if they are unable to get the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. The CDC recommends that people who received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine get the Pfizer or Moderna booster if they can.

• Adults who get the Novavax vaccine should not get any booster at this time.

Ask a health care provider if you have questions about which booster is right for you.

**WHY YOU SHOULD GET A COVID-19 VACCINE**

**What can I do differently once I am up to date on my COVID-19 vaccines?**

Once you are up to date on your COVID-19 vaccines, you can participate in many of the activities that you did before the pandemic.

Vaccines provide the best protection against severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19. However, people who are vaccinated can still get infected and spread the virus to others. Everyone should stay up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines by getting a booster shot when they are able. Get information on COVID-19 boosters.

Even if you are vaccinated, you should get tested if you have any symptoms of COVID-19. People with COVID-19 should stay away from others for at least five full days. They should then wear a mask for an additional five days. People who have not been vaccinated and may have been around someone with COVID-19 should stay from others for five days. They should also wear a mask for an additional five days. People who are vaccinated do not need to stay away from others if they may have been around someone with COVID-19 and don’t have any symptoms. This includes a booster for people ages 5 and older, if eligible.

**Why do I need to get a vaccine if I can do other things to prevent COVID-19 from spreading, like staying away from other people?**

Vaccines prepare your body to fight the virus if you are exposed to it. Vaccines help protect you from getting very sick, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19. Other steps, like wearing a mask, staying 6 feet away from others, and washing your hands, help lower your chance of being infected or spreading the virus to others. Getting the COVID-19 vaccine is everyone’s best protection from getting and spreading COVID-19.

**Why should I get the COVID-19 vaccine if there are treatments for COVID-19?**

Preventing COVID-19 is much safer than treating it. Vaccines may protect you from getting infected. They can also help keep you from getting very sick. Even for people who develop a mild case of COVID-19, the symptoms can still bring discomfort. Common symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, body aches, new loss of taste or smell, “brain fog,” and more. These symptoms can last for weeks or even months for some people.

Some people who have had COVID-19 develop a condition called “long COVID.” Long COVID is when symptoms continue for four or more weeks. You can develop long COVID even after your original symptoms have resolved. These symptoms may be nothing like the symptoms you felt when you were first infected. Long COVID can happen to anyone, including people who were never hospitalized for COVID-19. The vaccines can help prevent infections that may lead to long COVID.

Getting vaccinated can also help keep your loved ones safe. This is especially important for those around you who can’t be vaccinated.

Don’t wait to get your vaccine, and get a booster as soon as you are able. Visit MySpot.nc.gov to find a vaccine location near you.

Treatments for COVID-19 are for people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and have symptoms. Treatments can help stop people from getting very sick by helping their body fight the virus. They can also shorten the time that...
you are sick by slowing the growth of the virus in your body. Treatments do not stop you from catching COVID-19 again later. Treatments do not stop you from spreading COVID-19 to others.

If you test positive and have symptoms, don’t wait to see a health care provider. Treatment needs to be started within the first few days after you are infected for it to work well. Talk to a health care provider about treatments, or visit our website for more information on treatments for COVID-19.

**Do I need to get the vaccine if everyone else is getting it?**

Yes. It is very important that everyone in North Carolina does their part to help get as many people vaccinated as possible, including boosters. The more people who are vaccinated, the faster we will end the pandemic. It can also make us more confident that we and our loved ones are protected as we get back to the people and places we love. We need everyone who can safely get vaccinated to do so. This will help protect those who can't be vaccinated because of their age or medical conditions. Prevention is the best treatment to protect against COVID-19, so get vaccinated and boosted.

**Do I still need to be vaccinated if I have had COVID-19?**

Yes, you should get vaccinated if you already had COVID-19. People who had COVID-19 and got better are somewhat protected against the virus, although we don’t know how long that protection lasts. This protection is called natural immunity. Growing evidence shows that getting vaccinated after having COVID-19 infection further increases protection from getting another infection and being hospitalized, even when cases in the community are higher.

Experts also don’t know exactly how long protection from natural immunity lasts or how it is affected by different variants of the virus. The risk of getting very sick, dying, or having long-lasting effects from COVID-19 far outweighs any benefit of natural immunity.

If you were treated for COVID-19 with monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma, you do not need to wait before getting a vaccine. Talk to a health care provider if you don't know what treatments you got or if you have questions about getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

**Do I still need to be vaccinated if I have antibodies to COVID-19?**

When antibodies are found (a positive test result), it may mean that a person was infected with COVID-19 and their body’s immune system responded to the virus at some point in the past. These antibodies can be found in the blood of people previously infected even if they didn’t have symptoms. Even if you have antibodies, you can still get infected, so getting vaccinated is still recommended.

**Should I get vaccinated or boosted against COVID-19 if I am currently sick with COVID-19?**

No. Wait until you feel better.

When you feel better, you should get vaccinated and boosted. It will give you more protection against getting sick again. A health care provider, pharmacist, or vaccine provider can tell you what to do. You can also call the NC COVID-19 Vaccine Help Center at 888-675-4567. Learn more about what to do if you are sick.

**Should children get vaccinated if they already had COVID-19?**

Yes, your child should still get the vaccine even if they have had COVID-19 in the past. Multiple studies show that COVID-19 vaccines can be safely given to people who have had COVID-19. Research shows that people get better protection by being vaccinated, even if they've had COVID-19. Any protection you may have gained from having COVID-19 may decrease over time, especially if you had mild symptoms. Getting vaccinated is also the best way to protect family and friends who can’t get the vaccine because they are not old enough or because they have certain medical conditions.

Anyone who is currently sick with COVID-19 should wait for their symptoms to go away completely before getting the vaccine. If your symptoms are mild or you don’t have any symptoms, wait 10 days after your first positive
COVID-19 test. People who were treated with monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma do not need to wait before getting vaccinated.

Can people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or who want to become pregnant be vaccinated?

People who are pregnant or who recently had a baby and are infected with COVID-19 are about 40% more likely to develop serious complications or die than their peers who have not been infected. They also have a higher risk of negative outcomes for both mom and baby. Getting up to date with COVID-19 vaccines is recommended for:

- People who are pregnant
- People who are breastfeeding
- People who are trying to get pregnant now
- People who might become pregnant in the future

On Sept. 29, 2021, the CDC shared an urgent health advisory to increase COVID-19 vaccination for people in these groups. They did this because vaccines can help prevent serious illness, deaths, and adverse pregnancy outcomes. More than 218,000 pregnant women have gotten at least one shot of a COVID-19 vaccine in the United States. You do not need to wait or avoid getting pregnant if you are planning to get vaccinated. People who are seeking fertility treatment can also get vaccinated. There is currently no reason to believe that any vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, cause fertility problems in women or men.

Growing evidence shows that getting vaccinated against COVID-19 during pregnancy is safe and works well. Research also shows that the benefits of getting a vaccine far outweigh the risks. The risks of getting COVID-19 are greater for pregnant women than for people who are not pregnant. Pregnant women with COVID-19 have a higher risk of being hospitalized and needing care in the ICU. Pregnant women with COVID-19 are at higher risk for preterm birth (delivering the baby earlier than 37 weeks). They might also be at higher risk for other negative health outcomes related to pregnancy than pregnant people who don’t have COVID-19. These outcomes could include pregnancy loss.

Babies whose moms were vaccinated may also get some protection from the vaccines. This is because the antibodies from the vaccines can be transferred from mom to baby. Getting the Pfizer, Moderna, or Novavax vaccine while pregnant might help keep babies 6 months and younger who get COVID-19 out of the hospital. A small study published in JAMA showed that babies born to moms who had been vaccinated against COVID-19 continued to have antibodies at six months, unlike babies born to moms who previously had COVID-19. This means that you and your baby may both be protected against COVID-19.

There are many ways for you to learn more about the vaccines and their safety for pregnant women and those who want to get pregnant. You can talk with a health care provider, send a message to an expert at MotherToBaby, or call 1-866-626-6847.

Learn more about COVID-19 vaccination and pregnancy, fertility, and breastfeeding here.

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvU8fmfOvb0

I’d like to get pregnant soon. Will the COVID-19 vaccine hurt my chances?

It is recommended that people who are trying to get pregnant now or might become pregnant in the future get vaccinated. Their partners should also get the vaccine. There is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines cause problems trying to get pregnant for women or men.

Many people have become pregnant after getting a COVID-19 vaccine. Recent studies found no differences in pregnancy success between women who were vaccinated and women who were not vaccinated. The risk of complications is higher for you and your growing baby if you get sick with COVID-19 while you’re pregnant.
I was vaccinated while pregnant and/or am currently breastfeeding. Should I delay the COVID-19 vaccine for my baby?

No, do not delay. Antibodies are transferred through breastmilk or passed through the placenta during pregnancy, but these antibodies may wane quickly and have not shown to be clinically meaningful in protecting infants from COVID-19. You should still get your baby vaccinated.

Can I get the COVID-19 vaccine if I just got another vaccine for something else?

You can get the COVID-19 vaccine at the same time as other vaccines. This includes the flu vaccine.

Who should NOT get a COVID-19 vaccine?

You should NOT get the vaccine if:

- You are very allergic to something in the vaccine itself. This is rare and should be checked with a doctor, pharmacist, or allergy specialist. (In most cases, getting COVID-19 is much more dangerous than an allergic reaction.)
- If you have a history of blood clots, don’t get the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. The Pfizer, Moderna, and Novavax vaccines work differently and are recommended.
- You are under 6 months old. The vaccine isn’t available for this age group.

Nearly everyone else should get the COVID-19 vaccine. This includes people who are young, old, healthy, or sick. Talk with a doctor first if you think you have a medical reason for not getting the COVID-19 vaccine. They can help you understand your options. If you should not get the vaccine, they can give you a written document that explains to others why you are not vaccinated.

ONE-DOSE VERSUS TWO-DOSE VACCINES

Will I be able to choose which vaccine I get?

All the vaccines work very well in preventing severe illness, hospitalization, and death. The Moderna, Pfizer, and Novavax COVID-19 vaccines are preferred. However, getting any vaccine, including the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, is better than not being vaccinated. The vaccine you receive will be based on age at the time of vaccination, which (if any) vaccine you received previously, and product available from your provider.

The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is only available to people who are allergic to the other vaccines, can’t access the other vaccines, or who would not get vaccinated if they are unable to get the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Check with your provider if you have questions about which vaccine is right for you or if you want a specific brand to see what they offer.

What are the differences between the one-shot and two-shot vaccines?

The CDC recommends that people get the Pfizer, Moderna, or Novavax vaccine to protect against COVID-19. However, the vaccines and boosters you can get depend on your age and which (if any) vaccine you received previously. Click on vaccine differences for more information. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is only available to adults who are allergic to the other vaccines, can’t access the other vaccines, or who would not get vaccinated if they are unable to get the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Ask a health care provider if you have questions about which vaccine is right for you.

The two-shot vaccines give your body temporary instructions to make a protein. This protein teaches your body to fight the COVID-19 virus. The one-shot vaccine (made by Johnson & Johnson) uses DNA to give your body the same type of temporary instructions. There is no COVID-19 virus in any of the vaccines. None of the vaccines can change your DNA. Learn more about how the vaccines work.
The temporary side effects are similar among all vaccines. People who get the one-shot vaccine may only experience these temporary side effects once from that vaccine. Temporary side effects may include a sore arm, headache, fever, or feeling tired and achy for a day or two after getting the vaccine. None of the vaccines can give you COVID-19.

**Why are two vaccine shots necessary for some vaccines at first?**

The Pfizer, Moderna, and Novavax vaccines require two shots (or sometimes three, depending on your age and if you have a moderately or severely compromised immune system). You need two shots to build up strong protection against COVID-19. The goal of the first shot is to get your body ready to have the best protection. The second shot strengthens this protection. It is important that your first two shots are the same vaccine brand.

The FDA and CDC recommend that everyone get two shots of the Moderna, Pfizer, or Novavax vaccine. They should also stay up to date with all recommended COVID-19 vaccines. This includes additional shots and boosters, depending on your age, if you have a compromised immune system and the initial vaccine brand you receive. Learn more about the [different COVID-19 vaccines](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html).

**How long should I wait to get the second (or third for kids under 5) shot of the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Anyone who got their first shot of the Pfizer, Moderna, or Novavax (for anyone 18 and older) COVID-19 vaccine should speak with a doctor to decide the best time to get their second shot (or third, if needed). The CDC suggests that waiting eight weeks between the first and second shots increases the protection the vaccines provide in people ages 12 to 49. It may also lower the small risk of heart inflammation (a condition known as myocarditis), especially for males.

It is still recommended to wait three weeks before getting a second Pfizer or Novavax shot and four weeks for the second Moderna shot for:

- People with moderately or severely compromised immune systems
- People ages 65 or older
- People at high risk of getting very sick from COVID-19
- Children ages 5 to 11 years if getting Pfizer and 6 to 11 years if getting Moderna (Novavax is not available for people under 18)

Children ages 6 months through 4 years who get the Pfizer vaccine will receive three shots. The first two shots should be given three weeks apart, and the third at least eight weeks after their second shot. Children ages 6 months through 5 years who do not have a compromised immune system and get the Moderna vaccine will receive two doses of Moderna four to eight weeks apart. Kids in this age group with weakened immune systems who start with Moderna will receive three shots, with four weeks between first and second shots, then at least four more weeks until the third. Talk with a health care provider if you have questions about when your child is due for his or her next shot.
What if I don’t get my second shot at the right time?

You should get your second shot as close to the recommended time as possible. However, if you get your second shot of a COVID-19 vaccine any time after the recommended date, you do not have to restart your vaccine shots.

Can I get a different vaccine for my second shot?

The CDC does not recommend getting a different vaccine brand for your second shot. If you got a Pfizer, Moderna, or Novavax vaccine, you should get the same vaccine brand when it’s time to get your second shot. This is true regardless of which vaccine you got for your previous shots. Those who got the Johnson & Johnson vaccine are fully vaccinated after one shot. However, it is recommended they get either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine for their first and second booster shots when they are able.

Do I need to go back to the same provider for my second shot or my booster?

No. You do not have to get the second shot at the same place where you got your first shot. If you go to a different provider for the second shot, make sure you go to a provider with the same brand of vaccine (e.g., Pfizer, Moderna, or Novavax) that you received for your first shot. Bring your vaccination card with you so the provider can confirm which vaccine you got and when. People who can get a booster can go to any available provider for their booster shot.

Who will continue to benefit from waiting three or four weeks between their first and second shots of COVID-19 vaccines?

Three weeks (Pfizer and Novavax) or four weeks (Moderna) between first and second doses is best for people who are more likely to be less protected after their first shot. This includes:

- people who have moderately or severely compromised immune systems
- people who are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19, such as adults who are 65 years and older
- people who need protection quickly, such as when the virus is quickly spreading in their community

Ask a health care provider about the best time for you to get your second shot.

Who might benefit from waiting eight weeks between their first and second shots of COVID-19 vaccines?

Eight weeks between the first and second shot is recommended for people ages 12 through 64 years – who:

- do not have a moderately or severely compromised immune system
- are not at increased risk of getting very sick from COVID-19
• do not need protection quickly

Talk with a health care provider about the best time to receive your second shot of the Pfizer, Moderna, or Novavax COVID-19 vaccine.

If two shots are necessary for some vaccines, how will I know when to get my second shot?

North Carolina uses a secure data system called the COVID-19 Vaccine Management System (CVMS) to make sure you get your second shot or booster at the right time. When a person gets the first shot, they are asked to make a second appointment. You do not have to go back to the same provider for other shots or boosters. You will also be given a vaccination card with information about which vaccine(s) you got and the date when you got them. Keep the card in a safe spot. Take a picture of it in case it gets misplaced. You may get an email or text with a reminder for your second shot.

People who choose to use v-safe, which is a CDC tool to that can give you personalized health check-ins after your shot, will also get text reminders for their second shot. The provider who gave the first vaccine may also help with reminders for the second shot. State and federal privacy laws make sure none of your private information will be shared. The shot you take and when you need your second shot is confidential health information. This information is carefully managed to protect your privacy.

VACCINE SAFETY

Have COVID-19 vaccines proven to be safe and effective?

Yes. The currently recommended vaccines have proven to build strong protection against COVID-19. They have also proven to protect against hospitalization and death from COVID-19. There were no serious safety concerns in the clinical trials. Safety data from more than 298 million shots of the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines that were given in the first six months after the vaccine was approved in the U.S. show that most reported side effects were mild and didn't last long.

Who makes sure the vaccines are safe?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) makes sure all food and drugs are safe. The COVID-19 vaccines must pass clinical trials like other drugs and vaccines. The FDA checks the data and authorizes vaccines only if they are safe and work well. Vaccines are held to very high safety standards because they are given to millions of healthy people to prevent serious diseases.

The FDA can get vaccines to people faster through an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). After the FDA has authorized a vaccine, an independent advisory committee for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reviews the data. The advisory committee then advises the CDC on whether a vaccine should be given to the general public. Like all vaccines, the FDA keeps checking safety through the Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System (VAERS). Health care providers are required to report serious side effects. They also have to report if someone gets seriously sick with COVID-19. There is also a smartphone app called v-safe that uses text messages and web surveys to do health check-ins after people receive a COVID-19 vaccine. People can report any problems they may have with a vaccine through v-safe. The CDC and FDA continue to monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines with several vaccine safety monitoring systems.

Which vaccines have received FDA approval?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to help prevent COVID-19 in people ages 16 years and older. The Pfizer vaccine is also authorized for children ages 6 months to 15 years under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). The Pfizer vaccine should also be given as a booster for people ages 5 years and older. Children ages 6 months through 11 years get a smaller dose of the Pfizer vaccine than people 12 years and older. A third dose of the Pfizer vaccine should be given to certain people who have compromised immune systems.
The FDA also authorized use of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine under EUA in people 6 months through 17 years. Spikevax, the FDA-approved Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, is for use in those 18 years and older. It is the same vaccine with a new name. Moderna is also available under EUA as a third primary series dose for those 6 months through 17 years with certain kinds of immunocompromise and as a booster dose for those 18 and older. Children and teens under 18 who get the Moderna vaccine should not receive any booster at this time.

The FDA also authorized use of the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine under EUA in people 18 years and older. The Novavax vaccine provides a more familiar type of protein-based vaccine technology that has been used for more than 30 years in shots that help prevent diseases like shingles, hepatitis B, the flu, and other illnesses. Novavax is not currently approved for use as a third dose or booster. It is not recommended that people who get the Novavax vaccine get any booster at this time.

All available COVID-19 vaccines in the United States have been under an EUA. Rigorous clinical trials among thousands of people have proven that vaccines are safe and effective. Over 210 million people in the United States have been safely vaccinated against COVID-19.

**How were the vaccines developed so quickly?**

Scientists had a head start in developing all the vaccines. They are built on decades of research. The last decade of investment and experience in vaccine making was used to help us fight COVID-19. Creating these vaccines did not skip any steps in development, testing, or clinical trials.

**Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?**

No. The vaccine does not contain any virus that could make you sick with COVID-19. The vaccine gives your body instructions that teach your body to fight COVID-19. Your body naturally breaks down or destroys the instructions from the vaccine.

**Are there any side effects from the vaccines?**

No serious side effects were reported in clinical trials. Safety data from more than 298 million doses of Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines administered in the first six months after they were approved in the U.S. show that most reported side effects were mild and didn’t last long. Temporary side effects after getting the vaccine may include a sore arm, headache, feeling tired and achy for a day or two, or a fever. These temporary side effects were more common after the second shot. Younger people are more likely to have side effects than older people.

In most cases, these temporary side effects are good signs that your body is building protection. You can take medicines like Tylenol or ibuprofen after getting your shot to help with these temporary side effects. While extremely rare, there have been a few cases of severe allergic reaction to the Pfizer vaccine. Vaccine providers are prepared with medicines if they need to treat someone.

While it is extremely rare, there have been very few cases (out of about 18.7 million shots) of a condition called thrombosis with thrombocytopenia (TTS) associated with the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. TTS is defined by blood clots with low platelets. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends getting the Pfizer, Moderna, or Novavax COVID-19 vaccine for most people for preventing severe illness and hospitalization from COVID-19. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is only available to those who are allergic to the other vaccines, can’t access the other vaccines, or who would not get vaccinated if they are unable to get the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

If you have been vaccinated with the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and develop:

- Shortness of breath, chest pain, leg swelling, persistent abdominal pain, severe or persistent headaches or blurred vision, easy bruising, or tiny blood spots under the skin beyond where the vaccine was given within three weeks of getting the vaccine, seek medical attention right away.

There are no safety concerns for people who were previously vaccinated and did not experience TTS.

The FDA reported that there have been very rare cases of Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) after getting the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine with 100 preliminary cases out of more than 12.8 million. These cases mostly
GBS is a disorder that affects the brain. It is usually triggered by an infection that most people fully recover from.

Nearly all COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths occur in people who are not vaccinated. You are more likely to get seriously sick from COVID-19 if you are not vaccinated than you are to get an extremely rare and serious side effect after getting your vaccine. Everyone who can get a COVID-19 vaccine should get vaccinated and get a booster when it is time.

**What is the risk of an allergic reaction from the vaccine?**

Severe allergic reactions to the vaccines have been very rare and mostly occurred in people who have had previous severe allergic reactions. People who have had severe allergic reactions, also called anaphylaxis, to any ingredient in the Pfizer, Moderna, Novavax, or Johnson & Johnson vaccines should not get that vaccine. People who have had this type of severe allergic reaction to any vaccine or treatment that is injected should talk with their health care provider about the risks and benefits of getting vaccinated. People with allergies to foods, animals, environmental triggers (such as pollen), latex, or medications taken by mouth can be vaccinated with any of the COVID-19 vaccines. The same is true if you have family members who have had severe allergic reactions. You will be screened before getting the vaccine to see if you are at an increased risk for an allergic reaction. If you are, your health care provider may decide that you should not get the vaccine. Most reactions occur within a few minutes to one hour after getting vaccinated. You will be asked to stay at the place where you got your vaccine for a short time (15-30 minutes) for monitoring to ensure your safety. More information can be found [here](#) for the Pfizer, Moderna, Novavax, and Johnson & Johnson vaccines.

If you had a severe or immediate allergic reaction (within four hours) after getting a dose of the Moderna, Pfizer, or Novavax vaccine, you should NOT get a second shot of those vaccines. Talk to your provider about getting a different type of vaccine after an allergic reaction. More information for people with COVID-19 vaccine allergies can be found [here](#).

**How do I report a problem or side effect caused by the COVID-19 vaccine?**

The CDC and FDA encourage you to report possible side effects using the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). This national system collects data to look for side effects that are unexpected. They also look for side effects that appear to happen more often than expected or have unusual patterns. Reports to VAERS help the CDC monitor the safety of vaccines. Safety is a top priority.

The CDC also implemented a smartphone-based tool called v-safe to check in on people’s health after they get a COVID-19 vaccine. When you get your vaccine, you should also get a v-safe information sheet telling you how to enroll in v-safe. If you enroll, you will get regular text messages with surveys where you can report any problems or side effects you have after getting a COVID-19 vaccine. CDC especially encourages parents and caregivers of children to enroll them in v-safe to help our understanding of post-vaccination health effects in kids.

**When should I see a doctor if I have side effects after getting vaccinated?**

Contact a health care provider if:

- any redness or tenderness where you got the shot increases after 24 hours
- your temporary side effects are worrying you
- the side effects do not seem to be going away after a few days

It is extremely rare that you would have a serious reaction. However, you should contact a health care provider if you develop:

- severe headache, backache, severe abdominal pain, new changes in vision, a changed mental status, numbness, leg pain or swelling, shortness of breath, tiny red spots on your skin, or new or easy bruising within three weeks after getting vaccinated.
In most cases, temporary side effects are normal and good signs that your body is building protection. Safety data from more than 298 million doses of the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines that were given in the first six months after the vaccines were approved in the U.S. show that most reported side effects were mild and didn’t last long. If you experience side effects, taking medicines such as ibuprofen or Tylenol, drinking lots of fluids, or placing a cool washcloth on your forehead can help.

If you have a history of allergic reactions to any vaccine or treatment that is injected, you should talk with your health care provider about the risks and benefits of getting vaccinated before getting the shot. Although very rare, if you experience a severe allergic reaction to the vaccine, get immediate medical care by calling 911. Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include difficulty breathing, swelling of your face and throat, a fast heartbeat, a bad rash all over your body, dizziness, and weakness. An allergic reaction is considered severe when a person needs to be treated with the medication epinephrine or and EpiPen®. It is also considered severe if the person must go to the hospital.

**What do we know about the vaccine's long-term safety?**

More than 548 million COVID-19 shots were given in the United States from Dec. 14, 2020, through Feb. 16, 2022. COVID-19 vaccines were studied in tens of thousands of people in clinical trials. The vaccines met the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA’s) strict scientific standards for safety, effectiveness and quality needed to support emergency use authorization (EUA) and approval. The CDC continues to actively collect safety data using the [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System](https://vaers.hhs.gov), which has been tracking safety on all vaccines since 1990. Learn more about all the ways that vaccine safety is being monitored [here](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/safety/index.html).

**Why is the CDC recommending the Moderna, Pfizer, and Novavax COVID-19 vaccines as the preferred vaccines?**

The recommendation is based on comparing evidence on safety and effectiveness of the Moderna, Pfizer, Novavax, and Johnson & Johnson vaccines. It follows similar recommendations from other countries, including Canada and the United Kingdom. There is also a large supply of these vaccines in North Carolina and across the country.

Research has found more cases of a rare condition with blood clotting and low platelets associated with the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine. This rare condition is called thrombosis with thrombocytopenia (TTS). TTS after the Johnson & Johnson shot is rare. There have been around four cases per one million doses given. The CDC continues to remind people that receiving any vaccine, including the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, is better than not being vaccinated. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is only available to those who are allergic to the other vaccines, can’t access the other vaccines, or who would not get vaccinated if they are unable to get the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. People with a history of TTS should not get the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. All the vaccines continue to be carefully monitored for safety. [Read more information from the CDC about side effect concerns](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/safety/index.html).

**Is myocarditis, or heart inflammation, a side effect of COVID-19 vaccines?**

There have been rare reports of a condition called myocarditis occurring after someone is vaccinated with the Pfizer, Moderna and Novavax COVID-19 vaccines in the United States and Europe. Myocarditis happens when your heart muscle becomes inflamed. Another condition known as pericarditis happens when the outer lining of the heart is inflamed. In both cases, the body's immune system is causing inflammation because of an infection or some other trigger. Myocarditis can be serious, but these cases are often mild and get better without any treatment. These cases are seen more often in teens and young adults after their second shot and within a week of vaccination. Symptoms can include abnormal heart rhythms, difficulty breathing, and chest pain. However, the risk of rare heart-related problems like myocarditis and pericarditis is much higher from becoming infected with COVID-19 than from the vaccines. [Recent data from 40 health care systems](https://www.cdc.gov/covid19/clinicians/updates/2022-04-11.html) found that the risk for rare heart problems was much larger after a COVID-19 infection than after getting vaccinated. This was true for both males and females of all ages. Young men infected with COVID-19 are up to eight times more likely to get rare heart problems than men who were vaccinated against COVID-19.

The CDC has systems set up to look for safety concerns with the vaccines. These systems are watched closely. The CDC will continue to look at any reports of myocarditis and pericarditis that happen after COVID-19 vaccination.
The CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices has also reviewed the data. The CDC, American Academy of Pediatrics, and a few other medical and public health groups released a statement recommending COVID-19 vaccines. They noted that this is an extremely rare side effect with mostly mild cases. More people who developed these side effects after vaccines got better on their own or with a small amount of treatment compared to people who got COVID-19.

**Is the vaccine safe for children with special health care needs?**

Children and youth with special health care needs are especially vulnerable to COVID-19, and some infected children are having long-term side effects of COVID-19. Many children with disabilities have underlying medical conditions that put them at increased risk for getting very sick from COVID-19. The COVID-19 vaccine is safe and available for children 6 months and older who have special health care needs, and the CDC recommends that children in this group get vaccinated. For more information and resources about getting children with disabilities vaccinated, visit the CDC’s vaccine guidance page for children with disabilities.

**What should I do if I got a vaccine in another country that is not currently available in the United States?**

If you got a COVID-19 vaccine that was NOT FDA-authorized, FDA-approved, or among the vaccines listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization (WHO), these shots do not count toward vaccination in the U.S. You should start over with an FDA-approved or authorized vaccine at least 28 days after your last shot. Five months after your second shot, you should get a Pfizer or Moderna booster shot. Please note that no data are available on whether starting over with your vaccines is safe or works well.

If got a COVID-19 vaccine that is not authorized by FDA, but is on the WHO list for emergency use, you do not need to start over with your vaccines. However, you should get a Pfizer or Moderna booster shot at least five months after your last shot.

Additional information about these recommendations can be found here and here is a list of vaccines and their authorizations.

**What other COVID-19 vaccines are being developed and considered?**

It is difficult to say when other vaccines may be available. As of March 2021, the COVID-19 vaccines listed below are either in the last phase of clinical trials, planned to start the last phase of clinical trials, or have completed clinical trials in the U.S.:

- AstraZeneca’s COVID-19 vaccine
- Ocugen, Inc. submitted an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) request to the FDA for a vaccine called COVAXIN™ for children between the ages of 2 and 18 years.

You cannot get COVID-19 from any of the vaccines in development. All vaccines teach your body to fight the COVID-19 virus.

**How can someone enroll in a clinical trial for a vaccine?**

Over 100 vaccines for COVID-19 are under development. Many are in clinical trials that are looking for participants. People interested in enrolling in a COVID-19 vaccine trial can visit the following website: https://www.coronaviruspreventionnetwork.org/understanding-clinical-studies/.

**AFTER YOUR VACCINATION**

**Will I be provided with proof that I have had the vaccine?**

Yes. You will receive a card that tells you what COVID-19 vaccine you got, when you got it, and where you got it. Keep the card in a safe spot. Take a picture of it in case you lose it. Some people who have email will also get an email with proof of vaccination.
Many people can get their COVID-19 vaccine information from the North Carolina COVID-19 Vaccine Portal if they got the vaccine from one of the following locations:

- A North Carolina doctor’s office
- Hospital
- Pharmacy
- Grocery store
- Health department
- Community event

Please see more information on how to access the NC COVID-19 Vaccine Portal.

Your vaccine information will not be available if you got the vaccine:

- Outside of North Carolina
- In a military setting
- At a tribal or urban Indian health facility

Contact your provider for vaccine information.

If you lose your vaccine card or need your record, contact your vaccine provider.

**Can I stop wearing a mask after I’m vaccinated?**

Well-fitting masks with layers help to protect you from all COVID-19 variants. Higher grade masks, like N95, KN95s, surgical, or procedure masks, offer even more protection.

You should still wear a mask indoors if:

- You are at high risk of getting very sick from COVID-19.
- You have not been vaccinated or are not up to date on your vaccines.
- You have COVID-19 or were around someone who got the virus.
- You want an added layer of protection.
- You are in a high-risk setting (i.e., hospitals, doctor’s offices, long-term care facilities, prisons, jails, homeless shelters).

**When am I considered fully vaccinated against COVID-19?**

The CDC uses the term fully vaccinated for people who got:

- Two shots of the Pfizer, Moderna, or Novavax vaccine (or three shots for kids 6 months to 4 years getting a Pfizer vaccine), or;
- One dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, and;
- It has been at least 2 weeks since their most recent shot.

This includes people who:

- Got a vaccine authorized or approved by the FDA (Pfizer, Moderna, Novavax, or Johnson & Johnson).
- People who got all of their shots in a vaccine series that is listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization, or;
- People who participated in a clinical trial in the United States and got all of the recommended shots of an active COVID-19 vaccine that is listed for emergency use by the WHO (e.g., AstraZeneca) or has been independently confirmed by a data and safety monitoring board.

The CDC and NCDHHS recommend that everyone stay up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines. Being up to date includes:

- Getting a booster shot if or when you are able.
• Getting a second booster if you are 50 years or older.
• Getting an additional dose, booster and second booster if you have a compromised immune system, depending on the vaccine you get and your age. People 18 and older who get the Novavax vaccine and people under 18 who get the Moderna vaccine should not receive any vaccine booster at this time.

People who got a total of two shots of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine can choose to get a second booster shot of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, but a second booster is not required for them to be up to date. Talk with a health care provider if you have questions about whether a second booster is right for you.

Learn more about boosters.

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpkXIOJro5I&feature=emb_logo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAY UP TO DATE ON COVID-19 VACCINES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months to 4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Moderna to 5 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 17 years (Moderna 6 to 17 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 doses; 1 booster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 years and older</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals with Compromised Immune System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months to 4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Moderna to 5 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 11 years (Moderna 6 to 11 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 doses; 1 booster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 to 17 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 doses; 2 boosters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 years and older</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 doses; 2 boosters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How long will the vaccine protect me from COVID-19?

The vaccine continues to work very well in protecting people from serious illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19. This is true even with the spread of new variants. However, it has shown less protection from getting infected with the virus. Boosters are recommended for all North Carolinians 5 years and older to strengthen your protection from COVID-19. Many vaccines require more than one shot for immunity, and booster shots for vaccines are common. For example, it is recommended that everyone 6 months and older get a flu shot each year. Additionally, adults should get a tetanus booster every 10 years. Everyone should get their COVID-19 booster as soon as they are able. This is especially important with the discovery of variants that spread quicker. You should get a booster if:

• You are 5 years or older and got your second shot of the Pfizer vaccine at least FIVE months ago, or
• You are 18 years or older and got your second shot of the Moderna vaccine at least FIVE months ago, or
• You are 18 or older and got your Johnson & Johnson vaccine at least TWO months ago.

You may also be able to get a second booster if you:

• Are 50 years or older and got your first booster at least four months ago
• Got a total of two shots of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine at least four months ago
• Are 12 years or older with a compromised immune system and got your first booster at least four months ago

Some people may want to get a booster of the same vaccine brand that they got for their other shots. Others may want to get a different booster. People 18 and older who get the Novavax vaccine and people under 18 who get the Moderna vaccine should not receive any vaccine booster at this time.

Do I need a booster if I had an antibody test after getting the vaccine and antibodies were not detected?

CDC does not recommend antibody testing before or after getting the COVID-19 vaccine to check if a person is protected. According to the FDA, antibody tests are helpful for finding out whether a person previously had a COVID-19 infection. These tests have not been used to see if the vaccine worked. For more information, see the FDA’s statement on antibody testing.

Will the vaccine affect testing for possible COVID-19 infection?

Getting a COVID-19 vaccine will not affect the most common tests used to test for the COVID-19 virus. These tests are called PCR or antigen tests. The vaccines do not affect these test results because there is no virus in the vaccines. However, vaccines can affect the results of some COVID-19 antibody tests because of the immune response to the vaccine. More details can be found from the CDC here.

What should I do if I am worried that I have COVID-19 after I am vaccinated?

You should get tested and stay away from other people if you start to have symptoms of COVID-19 after being vaccinated. This is true even if you have been vaccinated. Your health care provider and local health department will report the test results to NCDHHS. This includes notification of a COVID-19 infection after being vaccinated. Getting COVID-19 is more likely if you are not vaccinated. Getting vaccinated provides strong protection from serious illness, hospitalization, and death.

If I do not get the COVID-19 vaccine, how long will I have to wear a mask?

NCDHHS no longer requires everyone to wear a mask if they are not vaccinated. However, some places may continue to require that people wear masks, like health care and long-term care settings.

NCDHHS does recommend wearing a mask if:

• You are at high risk for severe illness.
• You are unvaccinated or not up to date on your vaccines.
• You have COVID-19 or were exposed to the virus.
• You want an added layer of protection.
• You are in a high-risk setting (examples: health and long-term care facilities, correctional facility, homeless shelter).

GOVERNMENT DATA AND PRIVACY

Will I need to sign a consent form to get vaccinated?

People 18 and older can give their verbal consent. Written consent is not generally required, but some providers may require or request written consent. For information on consent for minors, see "Do kids under 18 need their parent or guardian’s permission to get a COVID-19 vaccine or booster?"

Does the state require vaccination?

No. North Carolina has no plan to require people to be vaccinated against COVID-19. It is possible that some employers or schools will require vaccines for their employees or students. Employers may ask if you have been vaccinated but cannot require that you share any other personal medical information.
How will the state know who has been vaccinated?

North Carolina uses the COVID-19 Vaccine Management System (CVMS) and the NC Immunization Registry (NCIR). These systems help vaccine providers know who has been vaccinated and with which vaccine to make sure people get the second shot of the same vaccine at the right time. It can also help make sure people get their booster shot at the right time. It also allows the state to manage vaccine supply. Many pharmacies, such as CVS, Walgreens, Walmart, and other grocery pharmacies do not use CVMS to give and manage vaccines. These pharmacies use their own systems. However, this information is shared with CVMS so providers and people who get the vaccine can make sure everyone gets the right shot at the right time.

What data is the state collecting, and how will it be shared?

Information about your COVID-19 vaccination is carefully managed to protect your privacy. Your vaccine information will not be shared except in accordance with state and federal law. NC CVMS is a system that gathers information for health and safety reasons. The information collected for NC CVMS is similar to the information that is required when you go to the doctor’s office or a pharmacy for a vaccine. This includes your:

- Name
- Address
- Date of birth
- The location where your vaccine was given
- When the vaccine was given
- The person who gave the vaccine
- Information about the vaccine you were given (expiration date, vaccine identifier number, etc.)
- How the vaccine was given (e.g., in the muscle of the right arm)

NC CVMS also collects information about race and ethnicity. This is needed to support efforts to make sure there is equal access to people across the state. North Carolina does not share any identifiable information to CDC. Instead, the state shares the following information with the CDC:

- The person’s year of birth (not date of birth)
- The first three digits of the person’s zip code if more than 20,000 people share your zip code of residence
- The date when the person’s vaccine record is created.

More information about federal CDC data requirements is available at: https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/reporting/requirements/index.html.

What data about vaccinations will be available to the public?

North Carolina has an online public dashboard to share data on vaccinations. The data in the dashboard is updated weekly on Wednesdays.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE VACCINES

How do the vaccines work?

You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccines. All of the vaccines currently approved for use in the U.S. give your body temporary instructions to make a protein. The two-shot Pfizer and Moderna vaccines use something called mRNA technology, while the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine uses DNA technology to give these instructions. The Novavax vaccine provides a more familiar type of protein-based vaccine technology that has been used for more than 30 years in shots that help prevent diseases like shingles, hepatitis B, the flu, and other illnesses. This protein safely teaches your body to make germ-fighting antibodies against the COVID-19 virus. These germ-fighting antibodies are then ready to fight off the real COVID-19 virus if it ever tries to attack you. Your body naturally breaks down everything in the vaccine. There is no COVID-19 virus in the vaccine. None of the vaccines can change your DNA.
What are the ingredients in the COVID-19 vaccines?

The COVID-19 vaccines give your body temporary instructions to fight off COVID-19. Your body naturally destroys the instructions and gets rid of them. None of the vaccine ingredients remain in your system. They do not alter any DNA in your body. The three COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States do not contain eggs, preservatives, fetal tissue, stem cells, mercury, or latex. For a full list of ingredients, please see each vaccine’s Fact Sheet for Recipients and Caregivers:

- Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine
- Moderna COVID-19 vaccine
- Novavax COVID-19 vaccine
- Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine

Will the vaccines work against new variants of the COVID-19 virus?

All viruses change over time. These changes (known as variants) are expected. Scientists are working to learn more about new COVID-19 variants and their effects on vaccines. There continues to be good evidence that the authorized COVID-19 vaccines provide protection against severe illness, hospitalization, and death from the variants that have been discovered. Getting vaccinated also helps to prevent the virus from spreading and helps keep variants from being created. A recent study showed that the vaccines work very well in preventing hospitalization and death from COVID-19, even with the more recent Omicron variant. However, breakthrough infections are likely to occur in people who are up to date with their vaccines. Booster shots increase how effective the vaccine is against the Omicron variant. That is why it’s important that you stay up to date with all recommended COVID-19 shots and boosters.

Evidence suggests that Omicron is two to three times as contagious as the original COVID-19 virus. This makes it four to six times as contagious as the Delta variant. Data collected so far show that protection from COVID-19 vaccines may weaken quicker over time than was seen with other variants. However, vaccines are still effective at keeping you from getting very sick with COVID-19. **Protection against Omicron increases greatly after a booster shot.** Vaccines and boosters are needed to protect you from getting very sick during surges. People who are at greatest risk of getting very sick from COVID-19 include people who:

- Are older
- Living in long-term care facilities like nursing homes
- Have other medical conditions
- Have suppressed immune systems

People in these groups should get vaccinated and get a booster as soon as possible. They may also be able to get a second booster shot for more protection. More information can be found on the [CDC website](https://www.cdc.gov).

Video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vraU5bYof34&feature=emb_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vraU5bYof34&feature=emb_logo)

Are there fetal cells or fetal tissues in the vaccine?

None of the vaccines contain fetal cells or fetal tissues. Fetal cells were used in research to develop all three vaccines. Vaccines commonly use fetal cells in development. The Pfizer, Moderna and Novavax vaccines do not need fetal cells to produce the vaccines. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine uses fetal cells that were isolated over 30 years ago to produce its vaccine.

Couldn’t find the answer you were looking for?

Call the COVID-19 vaccine help line at 888-675-4567. Hours for the vaccine line are:

- Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m.
- Saturday and Sunday from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m.

You can also check the following websites: [CDC Vaccines for COVID](https://www.cdc.gov), [NCDHHS COVID Vaccines](https://www.ncdhhs.gov), [COVID.gov](https://www.covid.gov)