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

- No government ID is required.
- Depending on where you get your vaccine, you may need to make an appointment.
- Everyone can be vaccinated regardless of their immigration status. Getting vaccinated will not affect your immigration status.

Search vaccines.gov, text your ZIP code to 438829, or call 800-232-0233 for locations that may provide free vaccines.

IN THIS DOCUMENT

GETTING YOUR VACCINE AND STAYING UP TO DATE ON SHOTS

Who can get a COVID-19 vaccine?

The COVID-19 vaccine is available for [everyone 6 months and older](#). Because the COVID-19 virus continues to evolve, the fall vaccine is designed to match the changing virus and help protect people from serious illness, hospitalization and death. If you have had a previous COVID-19 shot, you should wait at least two months before getting the fall vaccine. If you have a compromised immune system, you may need the vaccine sooner. Talk with a health care provider to decide what is best for you. Safe and effective vaccines are the best way to protect against COVID-19. It is especially important for those at higher risk of complications — people 65 and older, children younger than 5, pregnant women and those with certain medical conditions, like asthma, diabetes, and heart disease.

Do I need an additional dose if I have a compromised immune system?

People 6 months and older who have a compromised immune system may get an additional dose of the fall COVID-19 vaccine. Talk with a health care provider about what is right for you. If you have a weakened immune system, you are at increased risk of getting really sick or being hospitalized from COVID-19. Additionally, your immune response to the COVID-19 vaccine may not be as strong as in people who do not have a compromised immune system. Detailed information on COVID-19 vaccines for people with compromised immune systems can be found [here](#).

If I already had the COVID-19 vaccine, do I need the fall vaccine?

The fall COVID-19 vaccine is designed to match the changing virus and is recommended for everyone 6 months and older. If you have had a previous COVID-19 shot, you should wait at least two months before getting the fall vaccine.

Check availability for the fall COVID-19 vaccine at your local pharmacy, grocery store, doctor, or other provider. Also, the location does not need to have the same vaccine brand as any previous shots if you are 5 or older. Kids 6 months to 4 years should get the same COVID-19 vaccine brand for all recommended doses, if possible, unless that same brand is not available, you are unsure of the previous brand your child had, or you are not willing to give your child the same brand for the fall vaccine. Speak with a doctor, nurse, or pharmacist if you have questions about what vaccine is right for you. Visit MySpot.nc.gov or call your local health department to learn more about the vaccine and where to find a vaccine provider near you.

Will there be more COVID-19 vaccine shots in the future?

The fall COVID-19 vaccine is recommended for most North Carolinians 6 months and older to strengthen your protection against COVID-19. The fall vaccine is designed to match the changing virus. Many vaccines require more than one shot for immunity, and updated shots for vaccines are common. For example, it is recommended that everyone 6 months and older get a flu shot each year.

NCDHHS will continue to follow the guidance of the FDA and CDC as we move North Carolina forward.

Do I need an ID card to get a vaccine?

An ID, like a driver's license, is not required to get a vaccine, but some medical offices may ask for it as part of their standard practice.

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

Yes. You can get a vaccine, including the fall COVID-19 vaccine anywhere no matter where you live. Everyone can be vaccinated regardless of their immigration status.

Can non-U.S. citizens get the vaccine?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccines are available to everyone. 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 does not impact your immigration status. Learn more from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The vaccine is covered by most health insurance. If you need help paying, search vaccines.gov, text your ZIP code to 438829, or call 800-232-0233 for locations that may provide free vaccines.

How much do the vaccines cost?

If you have health insurance, most plans will cover the COVID-19 vaccine at no cost. If you do not have insurance, or your insurance does not cover the cost of vaccines, and you are over 18, you may be able to get no-cost vaccines through the Bridge Access Program. You will be able to get vaccines through this program at safety net providers, like community health centers, local health departments, select pharmacies, and other locations. Search vaccines.gov, text your ZIP code to 438829, or call 800-232-0233 to find vaccine locations near you.

Children through the age of 18 who have Medicaid, are American Indian or Alaska Native, do not have health insurance, or whose health insurance does not cover the cost of vaccines can get vaccines at no cost through the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program.

Are children and teens able to get the vaccine?

Yes. Children and teens ages 6 months and older should get a COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccines can help keep children and teens from getting seriously sick if they do get COVID-19. Vaccinating children and teens 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.

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.

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.

Ask your child's doctor if there are other routine vaccines they might need to help keep them healthy.

Which vaccine should my child 4 years or younger get?

Children 6 months to 4 years may need multiple doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to be up to date, depending on if they have already had a COVID-19 vaccine. Everyone else 5 years or older, whether they have had an earlier COVID-19 vaccine or not, will need only one shot of the fall COVID-19 vaccine.

Kids get smaller doses of the vaccine than teens and adults. Parents should talk with a health care provider to make sure their child is up to date on COVID-19 and all other recommended vaccines.

Should I wait for the larger vaccine dose if my child is turning 5 or 12 soon?

No, do not wait. All vaccine doses are effective and will provide your child with the best protection. You should get your child vaccinated as soon as possible.

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

It depends. Anyone 11 years old or younger needs a parent or guardian's permission to get any COVID-19 vaccines. People 12 to 17 do not need permission to get the fall COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna). People 17 or younger need written consent to get the Novavax vaccine, as it is still under EUA. Kids and teens who have 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.

How can I avoid missing work to get my vaccine doses?

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. If you don't have paid time off or find it difficult to miss work, we encourage you to get vaccinated right before a day off.

I got a vaccine brand in another country that is not authorized in the United States. Can I get the fall COVID-19 vaccine?

Everyone 6 months and older who got a vaccine outside the U.S. should get at least one dose of the fall COVID-19 vaccine, unless they already got a Pfizer or Moderna fall COVID-19 vaccine or one listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization. Learn more about this vaccine guidance.

If you have a moderately or severely compromised immune system, you may need an additional shot as well. Learn more about the fallvaccine and additional doses.

Speak with a health care provider if you have questions.

How long after getting the fall COVID-19 vaccine does it take effect?

You are considered up to date right after you get the fall COVID-19 vaccine. Its effectiveness increases over the next two weeks; however, it doesn't take two weeks to start protecting you from COVID-19 because your first shot(s) already built up some immunity.

Will I be able to choose which vaccine I get?

Yes, you may be able to choose which vaccine you get. The Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines are preferred. Kids 6 months to 4 years should get the same COVID-19 vaccine brand for all recommended doses, if possible. At this time, an updated Novavax vaccine is not yet authorized. The vaccine you get will be based on your age at the time of vaccination and what vaccines your provider has available.

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.

Do I need to go back to the same provider for my fall vaccine if I previously got a COVID-19 vaccine?

No. You do not have to go back to the same place. If possible, bring your vaccination card with you if you have already had a previous COVID-19 shot. You can still get a vaccine without this card, but it will help the provider confirm when you got your last vaccine.

WHY YOU SHOULD GET A COVID-19 VACCINE

Why should I get my child vaccinated?

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. Research shows that the vaccine lowers the chance of having these severe and long-term effects from COVID-19 infection. Recent data shows that more than half of kids and teenagers hospitalized with COVID-19 have no underlying health problems that would increase their risk. COVID-19 vaccines can help our children continue to enjoy their lives to the fullest and make sure COVID-19 doesn't get in the way.

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, being hospitalized, and dying 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 really 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. Long COVID can happen to anyone, including people who were never hospitalized for COVID-19. Vaccines can reduce long COVID, for adults and children, particularly among those who stay up to date.

Getting vaccinated can also help keep your loved ones safe. This is especially important for those around you who can't be vaccinated. Visit MySpot.nc.gov for more information.

Treatments for COVID-19 may be a good option for people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and have symptoms. Treatments are particularly important for people at high risk of getting really sick from COVID-19, like people with heart disease, diabetes, or who are pregnant. Talk with a health care provider to decide if treatment makes sense for you. You can also go to MySpot.nc.gov/FindTreatment for more information. Treatments do not stop you from catching COVID-19 again later. Treatments do not stop you from spreading COVID-19 to others.

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

Yes, adults and children should get vaccinated if they already had COVID-19. 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 don't know exactly how long protection after getting COVID-19 lasts. The risk of getting very sick, dying, or having long-lasting effects from COVID-19 far outweighs any potential 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?

Even if you have antibodies, you can still get infected, so getting vaccinated is still recommended. 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.

Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine if I am currently sick with COVID-19?

No – for both adults and children, you should not get the COVID-19 vaccine if you are currently sick with the virus. You should wait until after your isolation ends. People who have symptoms will end isolation at a different time than people who do not have symptoms. Visit the CDC frequently asked questions for more information.

A health care provider, pharmacist, or vaccine provider can tell you what to do. You can also call the CDC-INFO contact center for more information at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636 / TTY 888-232-6348). The center is open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekends. Learn more about what to do if you are sick.

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

Yes, people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or trying to get pregnant now, as well as people who might become pregnant in the future, should get the COVID-19 vaccine. 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.

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. Pregnant women with COVID-19 have a higher risk of being hospitalized and needing care in the ICU. They are also 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. 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 vaccine while pregnant might help keep babies 6 months and younger who get COVID-19 out of the hospital.

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 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.

VACCINE SAFETY

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

Yes. The COVID-19 vaccines have proven to build strong protection against the virus and protect against hospitalization and death. 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. COVID-19 vaccines must pass clinical trials like other drugs and vaccines. The FDA checks the data and authorizes or approves 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.

FDA keeps checking safety through the Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System (VAERS). Health care providers are required to report serious side effects.

Which vaccines have FDA approval?

All available COVID-19 vaccines in the United States are either fully approved or have been under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) through the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). 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.

Visit this page to learn more about the EUA process.

How were the vaccines developed so quickly?

Scientists had a head start in developing all the vaccines and built on decades of research. Creating these vaccines did not skip any steps in development, testing, or clinical trials.

Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?

No. 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. 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. While extremely rare, there have been a few

cases of severe allergic reaction to COVID-19 vaccines. Vaccine providers are prepared with medicines if they need to treat someone.

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. Most everyone 6 months and older should get the fall COVID-19 vaccine to stay up to date.

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, or Novavax vaccines should not get that vaccine. People who have had this type of severe allergic reaction to any vaccine or treatment 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, and Novavax vaccines.

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). Reports to VAERS help the CDC monitor the safety of vaccines.

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. 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.

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

More than 672 million COVID-19 shots were given in the United States from Dec. 14, 2020, through March 1, 2023. COVID-19 vaccines were studied in tens of thousands of people in clinical trials. The vaccines meet 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, which has been tracking safety on all vaccines since 1990. Learn more about all the ways that vaccine safety is being monitored here.

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

Heart complications are more likely to occur from a COVID-19 infection than an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine. A study on vaccine safety specifically comparing risk of myocarditis after vaccine vs. infection showed that among young males, the risk of heart complications (e.g., myocarditis, pericarditis) was around 2 to 6 times higher after a COVID-19 infection than the vaccine. For men ages 18 to 29, the risk was 7 to 8 times greater. Among all other groups, the risk of cardiac complications was 2.2 to 115.2 times more likely from an infection than after a vaccine. No cases of heart complications were found in children 5 to 11 after the vaccine.

Myocarditis happens when your heart muscle becomes inflamed. Another condition known as pericarditis happens when the outer lining of the heart is inflamed. Myocarditis can be serious, but these cases are often mild and get better without any treatment. Symptoms can include abnormal heart rhythms, difficulty breathing, and chest pain.

The CDC has systems set up to look for safety concerns with the vaccines. These systems are watched closely.

AFTER YOUR VACCINATION

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

Many vaccine providers will give you physical or virtual copy of your vaccine record. Talk with your provider about how to access your COVID-19 vaccine information.

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 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).

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

The vaccine continues to work very well in protecting people from getting really sick, being hospitalized, and dying from COVID-19. This is true even with the spread of new variants.

The fall vaccine is recommended for most North Carolinians 6 months and older to strengthen your protection against COVID-19. Many vaccines require more than one shot for immunity, and updated shots for vaccines are common. For example, it is recommended everyone 6 months and older get a flu shot each year.

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. Getting vaccinated provides strong protection from getting really sick, being hospitalized, or dying from the virus.

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 Pfizer and Moderna vaccines use something called mRNA technology. The Novavax vaccine provides a more familiar type of protein-based vaccine technology. This protein safely teaches your body to make germ-fighting antibodies against the COVID-19 virus. 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](#)

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

The fall COVID-19 vaccine is available for everyone 6 months and older. This vaccine is designed to match the changing virus and provides the most up-to-date protection against severe illness and can lessen the symptoms of the virus if you get sick.

All viruses change over time. These changes (known as variants) are expected. Many vaccines require more than one shot for immunity, and updated shots for vaccines are common. For example, it is recommended that everyone 6 months and older get a flu shot each year.

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 compromised immune systems

People in these groups should get vaccinated as soon as possible. More information can be found on the [CDC website](#).

Video: 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.

Couldn't find the answer you were looking for?

Call the CDC-INFO contact center for more information at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636 / TTY 888-232-6348). It is open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekends.

You can also check the following websites: CDC Vaccines for COVID, NCDHHS COVID Vaccines, COVID.gov