**COVID-19 VACCINE: COMMON QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS**

**What are the kinds of COVID-19 vaccines and how do they work?**

Right now, there are three approved vaccines, from the Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson companies. The ones available to you depend on overall supply and the vaccination site. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines work the same way. They contain a small piece of the virus, but not the whole thing. Getting the vaccine trains your body to recognize the virus and kill it. Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require two doses.

The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is different. It uses a dead common cold virus to get a small piece of the COVID-19 virus into your body. It only requires one dose. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine doesn’t protect quite as well against mild cases of COVID-19, but it does protect as well against severe illness.

**Can the vaccine give me or my family COVID-19?**

No. None of the COVID-19 vaccines being used in the United States have live viruses, so they can't give you the disease. And because you won’t have the live virus, you can’t give it to your family.

**How can a safe vaccine be ready so quickly?**

For two main reasons. First, because of the pandemic, scientists all over the world cooperated on a single goal: find a vaccine as quickly as possible. Second, the U.S. government paid drug companies a lot of money—over $12 billion—so there was no financial risk for them to develop the vaccine. That meant that scientists could start each of the 4 stages of testing as soon as there was safety data from the last one. Creating new drugs is very expensive, around $1.3 billion per drug, so companies usually wait after each stage to figure out if the drug will pay for itself.

**Does the vaccine have something in it to track or control people?**

The COVID-19 vaccine does not stay in your body, so there is nothing in it that can track or control you. Getting the vaccine trains your body’s immune system to recognize a spike on the virus and kill any viruses with it. In that training process, all the original material from the vaccine is destroyed. To make sure residents stay healthy, Massachusetts does keep track of all immunizations in a confidential database. By law, only healthcare providers and public health officials can see it.

**I don’t need a vaccine. My immunity is already strong, or I use natural remedies.**

It’s great that you are already healthy. But COVID-19 is a new virus that your body hasn’t encountered before. Getting the vaccine will train your body’s immune system to recognize and kill it if you are exposed.

**I don’t need a vaccine because for most young/healthy people, COVID-19 isn't very serious.**

Some young and healthy people have very serious cases of COVID-19 and can even die from it. Others don’t even realize they have it. These people are actually the ones who spread COVID-19 the most. Scientists think about 60% of cases are caught from someone without symptoms. So even if you are young and/or healthy, getting the vaccine will stop the virus from spreading to others, including older family members and those with health conditions.

**Does the vaccine stay in my body?**

No. The vaccine trains your body to recognize the virus and kill it. In that training process, all the original material from the vaccine is destroyed.

**How long will immunity last?**

Scientists don’t know yet. It may be a couple years. If this is the case, people may need to be vaccinated every year, as is done with influenza.

**Has anyone died from the COVID-19 vaccine?**

No one has died from the COVID-19 vaccine in the United States. In Norway, some patients in their 80s and with existing medical conditions or who were terminally ill died after getting the vaccine. Scientists don’t know why yet. If it was related to the vaccine, it may have been because they were already very weak and their conditions were worsened by common side effects such as fever, nausea, or diarrhea. If you fall into this high-risk category, talk with your healthcare provider about what to do.

**I always get sick from the flu shot, so vaccines are not good for me.**

Vaccine side effects such as being tired, getting a fever, and having head or body aches are signs the vaccine is working and your body is building immunity. Isn’t it better to feel a little sick from the flu shot than to be one of the 12,000-61,000 people who die from influenza every year? And isn’t it better to feel a little sick from the COVID-19 vaccine than to be one of the almost half million Americans who have already died from the disease?

**I already had COVID-19. Do I still need the vaccine?**

Yes. You can get infected with COVID-19 a second time. Scientists still don’t know how long natural immunity lasts. So it is safest for you and your loved ones if you get vaccinated. Please note that if you were treated with monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma, you should wait 90 days before getting the vaccine.

**Who pays for the COVID-19 vaccine? What if I am uninsured?**

All residents of the United States are entitled to free COVID-19 vaccination. As part of its payments to drug companies, the U.S. government bought millions of doses of the vaccine and will buy many more. Whether you have private insurance, public insurance, or no insurance, you and your family can get vaccinated against COVID-19 free of charge.

**My risk from the vaccine is greater than my risk of getting very sick or dying from COVID.**

The facts don’t agree. Millions of people in the U.S. have already been vaccinated. A very, very, very small number have had allergic reactions. Compare that to the almost half million American who’ve already died from COVID-19.

**I’m pregnant or breastfeeding. Should I still get the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Pregnant women are at higher risk for severe COVID-19 if they get the disease. But scientists don’t yet have long-term data on pregnancy or breastfeeding and the vaccine. Doctors and nurses recommend that pregnant and breastfeeding women get the COVID-19 vaccine if they have a health condition or are an essential worker. Others may want to talk with their healthcare providers about what’s best for them and their babies.

**Does the vaccine have any non-halal or non-kosher ingredients?**

The vaccines do not include any pork, blood, or egg products.