

COVID-19 VACCINE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



Vaccination is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread and reduce the impact of infectious diseases. Safe and effective vaccines for COVID-19 will protect us against the virus and will be an important step to safely resume normal life. We must not forget that it will take time and all of us working together. Masks and social distancing are our reality right now, but there is a light at the end of the tunnel and we can all reach it if we work together.

1. How does the vaccine work?

- Vaccines work with your immune system so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed.
- The COVID-19 vaccine is mRNA-based.
- mRNA vaccines contain material from the COVID-19 virus that gives your cells instructions for how to make a harmless protein that is unique to the virus. Your body recognizes that the protein should not be there and builds cells that will remember how to fight the virus that causes COVID-19 if you are infected in the future.

2. Is there a difference between the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccine?

- Both the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccine work the same way using the same parts. They are both equally as effective.
- One difference is they require a different storage temperature, but they are equally as safe and as effective.

3. Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?

- No, the vaccine can not give you COVID-19.
- The vaccine does not contain any virus, alive or dead.

4. Once I get the vaccine, how long until I am immune?

- Building up immunity takes time. One dose of vaccine is not enough to provide individual protection.
- About two weeks after the first dose of the vaccine, there will be a moderate level of immunity.
- The highest level of immunity starts about one week after the second dose of the vaccine.

5. Will this change or affect my DNA?

- No. The COVID-19 vaccine uses mRNA. Humans do not have the ability to convert mRNA to DNA and your body can only turn mRNA into protein.

6. What is in the vaccine? Is there anything toxic or harmful?

- The mRNA is in the vaccine. This is wrapped in a small bubble of fat, or cholesterol (like a cardboard box) to keep it safe. There is some sugar and some electrolytes to keep the bubble of fat safe (like wrapping paper around the box).
- There is nothing toxic or harmful in the vaccine, and there are also no preservatives.

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7. What are the side effects?

- Like every vaccine, there may be possible side effects. The most common side effects are pain at the injection site, fatigue, and headaches.
- Other common side effects can include: fever, chills, muscle pain and joint pain.
- These side effects usually occur within 1-2 days after vaccination and go away within 1-3 days.

8. What if I am allergic to eggs and cannot get other vaccines?

- There is no egg protein in the COVID-19 vaccine.
- It is possible to be allergic to something else, but a major allergic reaction is extremely rare.
- If you are worried, please contact your healthcare provider to discuss your concerns.

9. Can the COVID-19 vaccine cause a false-positive COVID-19 test?

- No. The COVID-19 vaccine does not interfere with the test used to look for infection and do not give false positive test results.

10. Once I get vaccinated, can I stop wearing a mask?

- At this time, no. The vaccine reduces the risk of severe COVID-19 by about 95%.
- Even if we are vaccinated, we might still be able to transmit the virus to other people.
- Until vaccines are widely available, it is important to continue to protect yourself and your loved ones from COVID-19. Keep practicing protective measures such as washing your hands, physical distancing, covering your mouth when you cough, wearing a mask, and following local public health guidance.

11. Will the pandemic to be over once the vaccine is available for public use?

- Not exactly. It will take time for enough vaccine to be made and administered for the population to achieve herd immunity.
- Infectious disease experts expect COVID-19 to be around for a long time. The good news is that the virus will probably get less deadly over time.

12. How many people have been vaccinated?

- As of mid-January 2021, approximately 613,000 Canadians and 11 million Americans have received their first dose of the vaccine.
- Worldwide, more than 32 million people have already been vaccinated.

13. How was the vaccine made so quickly?

- The vaccine went through the same steps as any other vaccine.
- It was developed quickly because of never-before-seen levels of funding and collaboration around the world, with everyone working together to make a vaccine faster because COVID-19 is so deadly.
- Canada is recognized around the world for its high standards for drug and vaccine review, approvals and monitoring systems.

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14. When will I be able to get the vaccine?

- In Ontario, the plan is to use a three-phase approach to make sure the highest risk people are vaccinated first.
- Each phase overlaps with the next as we get more vaccine doses.
- Phase 1 includes residents and workers in long-term care homes, healthcare workers, and certain Indigenous communities.
- Phase 2 includes elderly patients, people who work in other high-risk settings, frontline essential workers, and patients with high-risk chronic conditions.
- Phase 3 includes everyone else who wishes to be vaccinated.

This vaccine has the potential to protect many people from this devastating virus. When it is said that a vaccine is 90 per cent effective, this means that if 100 people received the vaccine and were then exposed to the virus, 90 would be unlikely to get sick. While 10 would be at risk of still developing the infection, protection from vaccines is not all-or-nothing. These 10 individuals could have milder disease than someone who did not receive the vaccine.

Vaccination is a choice you should make to protect yourself, your family and community. Vaccination is a personal choice that the vast majority of Canadians agree is part of good health and important for prevention of serious disease.

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