

FAQs FOR PHYSICIANS

Will it hurt when I get the vaccine/what should I expect?

- You may feel a pinch when you get the vaccine itself, and afterward you should expect some soreness and/or swelling in the arm where you got the vaccine. It should go away within a few days.
- There is a chance you may also experience fever, chills, tiredness or a headache after you get your vaccine. These side effects are entirely normal and typical of other common vaccines such as your annual flu shot, and should all go away within a few days.

Is the vaccine safe?

- The vaccines that are available to Oklahomans are safe and effective. The FDA has rigorous scientific and regulatory processes in place that ensure the safety, effectiveness and quality of COVID-19 vaccines.
- Throughout the entire process, the vaccines were evaluated for their safety and efficacy. Oklahomans should feel confident in receiving the vaccines.
- All three vaccines available to Oklahomans now have been proven highly effective to keep you from getting seriously ill, being hospitalized or dying from COVID-19.
- We encourage all Oklahomans to receive the vaccine when it becomes available to them.

Does the vaccine have negative long-term effects?

- This vaccine is proven safe by the FDA and has been tested thoroughly by doctors. No widespread long-term negative effects have been reported. All vaccines have the potential for temporary side effects.
- We don't know the long term impact of COVID-19 yet. From the available data, the benefits of a vaccine outweigh the risk.

Which vaccine is better/more effective?

- All vaccines are highly effective to protect you from COVID-19. This includes people over the age of 65, as well as adults with underlying health problems that put them at high risk for COVID-19.
- All three vaccines have been granted Emergency Use Authorization by the FDA, meaning they are safe, effective and ready for Americans to use.
- **The best COVID-19 vaccine is the one you can get right away.** All three vaccines will help significantly to reduce your chances of getting seriously ill or dying as a result of COVID-19.

Are there side effects to any of the vaccines? Should I be concerned?

- After vaccination, you may experience some common side effects, which are normal signs that your immune system is functioning properly and your body is building protection.
- The following side effects are normal and a sign that your body is building protection against the virus. Everyone is unique — some experience mild to moderate side effects, while others have none.
- The side effects commonly reported for the COVID-19 vaccine are in line with those of other common vaccines, like the flu shot.
- Side effects could include soreness, redness or swelling on the arm where you got the shot. You might feel fatigue, headache, muscle pain, chills or fever.
- Any side effects should go away after a few days.

Why risk vaccine side effects? I'd rather just deal with COVID-19.

- While some people have mild symptoms from COVID-19, others have had very severe cases that have hospitalized them or caused their death — even young, healthy people. There can also be serious [long-term impacts of COVID-19](#): Fatigue, shortness of breath, cough, joint pain or chest pain.
- In contrast, all side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine (fever, chills, tiredness or a headache, soreness) will go away within a few days. The vaccine makes it much less likely that you'll have to go to the hospital or will die from COVID-19.

Why do I need the vaccine if I'm young and healthy?

- Even if you are young and healthy, getting the vaccine will help protect those around you from getting COVID-19, too — especially people who are at high risk, like the elderly and those who have other medical conditions. If more people get the vaccine, it will be easier for us to keep schools and businesses open, and get back to normal life.

Was the vaccine rushed?

- No, the vaccine went through all the usual FDA-required assessments and regulatory processes.
- With scientists and manufacturers around the world all focusing on combating COVID-19, parts of the vaccine production and manufacturing process were run concurrently.
- The FDA emergency authorized COVID-19 vaccines are as safe and effective as any other FDA-approved vaccine.

Does the Johnson & Johnson vaccine cause blood clotting?

- OSDH's decision to pause the use of Johnson & Johnson vaccine was made out of an abundance of caution for the health and safety of Oklahomans following the CDC and FDA recommendation that cited an occurrence of rare blood clotting responses in six Americans.
- This type of adverse reaction following administration of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is extremely rare.
 - The six cases that have occurred nationwide have been in women in the 18-48 range, and symptoms occurred within two weeks of vaccine administration.

- If you have received a Johnson & Johnson vaccine over two weeks ago, the risk of experiencing this reaction is very low.
 - We recommend that you call your doctor if you received the vaccine within the last two weeks and experience the following symptoms:
 - Persistent headaches
 - Abdominal pain
 - Leg pain
 - Shortness of breath
 - These symptoms will feel significantly different from the mild flu-like symptoms you might typically experience after getting a vaccine.
- All COVID-19 vaccines administered in the U.S. are undergoing some of the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history. Today's pause in administration is an indication that the system is working well to keep us safe and healthy.
 - To date, the CDC's monitoring system has not detected any cases of blood clotting in association with the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines.

How does an mRNA vaccine work to protect against COVID-19?

- mRNA vaccines are a type of vaccine to protect against infectious diseases. mRNA vaccines teach our cells how to make a protein — or even just a piece of a protein — that triggers an immune response inside our bodies. That immune response, which produces antibodies, is what protects us from getting infected if the real virus enters our bodies.
- COVID-19 mRNA vaccines give instructions for our cells to make a harmless piece of what is called the “spike protein.” The spike protein is found on the surface of the virus that causes COVID-19. Our immune systems recognize that the protein doesn't belong there and begin building an immune response and making antibodies, like what happens in natural infection against COVID-19.
- At the end of the process, our bodies have learned how to protect against future infection.
- The benefit of mRNA vaccines, like all vaccines, is that those vaccinated gain this protection without having to risk the serious consequences of getting sick with COVID-19.

Will the vaccine have any side effects for breastfeeding mothers or pregnant women?

- Right now, the CDC has no data on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in lactating women or the effects of mRNA vaccines on breastfed infants.
- However, mRNA vaccines are not live virus vaccines and are not thought to be a risk to breastfeeding infants.
- OSDH recommends that women who are pregnant or breastfeeding discuss the COVID-19 vaccine with their personal doctors to make an informed choice on receiving the vaccine.

What should I know about new COVID-19 strains or variants? Have new strains been detected in Oklahoma?

- Yes, some new strains have been detected in Oklahoma through sequencing capabilities at the Public Health Lab in Stillwater.
- OSDH will continue to monitor for new strains and will keep the public updated on new information as it becomes available.
- New strains of viruses occur when there is a change to the virus' genes. It is the nature of RNA viruses such as the coronavirus to evolve and change gradually, so this new strain is not unexpected.
- There will likely be other new strains as the virus continues to evolve.
- The 'U.K. strain' is more transmissible than the strain that has been in the U.S. previously, and will likely spread faster.
- For that reason, it is more important than ever that Oklahomans take precautions to protect themselves and others. Limit your exposure to people outside your own household and follow the three W's: wear a mask, wash your hands and watch your distance.

Does the COVID-19 vaccine work on new strains?

- As of right now, there is no evidence to suggest that the COVID-19 vaccines currently in production won't be effective against new strains of COVID-19 — so it is important to continue our progress through the vaccine distribution plan.
- Medical professionals advise that we continue to respond to this new strain the same way we have been. Follow the 3 W's, limit your exposure to others and consider getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

If I had COVID-19 already, do I still need to take the vaccine?

- We recommend you receive the vaccine, even if you have already had COVID-19.
- The protection someone gains from having an infection (called natural immunity) varies depending on the disease, and it varies from person to person. Since this virus is new, we don't know how long natural immunity might last.
- The CDC reports that some early evidence suggests that natural immunity may only last a few months.
- Getting the vaccine, even if you already had COVID-19, will help you protect yourself and others.

Can I still spread COVID-19 once I get the vaccine?

- The CDC recently provided updated data that suggests fully vaccinated people do not carry COVID-19.
- Out of an abundance of caution, we recommend all Oklahomans continue to follow the 3 W's even once you receive the vaccine to protect those around you who have not yet received the vaccine.

Can I travel once I am fully vaccinated?

- The CDC advises that fully vaccinated people can travel both within the United States and internationally.
- If you travel, you should still wear a mask in public places.

- You do not need to get a COVID-19 test before arriving in another country unless required to do so by authorities at the destination. However, you should have a negative test result before boarding a flight back to the U.S., and should also get tested 3-5 days after you return home.
- If you are not vaccinated, OSDH and the CDC still recommend you avoid travel, especially air travel, if at all possible.

How much does the vaccine cost?

- COVID-19 vaccine doses purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars will be provided to Americans free of charge.

Do I have to retake my vaccine if my second dose appointment is later than 21 or 28 days?

- No - there is some flexibility in when you can get your second dose.
- It's recommended you should get your second dose 21-28 (depending on which vaccine) days after your first dose of the vaccine. However, it can be longer if needed, as the timeline is flexible.
- You do not need to schedule your second dose appointment on exactly the 21-day or 28-day timeline.
- If it is not feasible to adhere to the recommended interval and a delay in vaccination is unavoidable, the second dose of Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines may be administered up to 6 weeks (42 days) after the first dose. There is currently limited data on the efficacy of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines administered beyond this window.
- If the second dose is administered beyond these intervals, there is no need to restart the series.

What does "fully vaccinated" mean?

- Individuals are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after they have received the final FDA-authorized vaccine of their initiating series (i.e., second dose of vaccine in a two-dose series like Pfizer or Moderna, or after they have received a single dose in a single-dose series like Johnson & Johnson).

What precautions, if any, do I need to follow once I'm fully vaccinated?

- If you are fully vaccinated, the CDC recommends that you can gather in small groups of 10 or fully vaccinated or low-risk people, ideally from the same household.
 - If everyone present is also fully vaccinated, you can omit wearing masks and social distancing.
- For now, fully vaccinated people should continue avoiding medium or large-sized gatherings where communal transmission could occur.
 - If you do attend a larger gathering, we advise that you continue to follow the three W's: wear a mask, wash your hands and watch your distance.

- This may change as more people receive the vaccine, but for the time being there are still a large number of unvaccinated Oklahomans who are at risk from COVID-19.
- It's recommended that everyone, including [fully vaccinated](#) people, continue wearing masks and practice social distancing in public to prevent transmitting COVID-19.
 - You should continue to take these precautions:
 - In public or at large gatherings
 - Gathering with unvaccinated people from more than one other household
 - Visiting with an unvaccinated person who could be at increased risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19
- Everyone, regardless of whether they are vaccinated or not, should continue monitoring for symptoms of COVID-19, especially if you've been around someone who is sick. If you have symptoms, you should get tested and stay home.

Can I travel without precautions if I'm fully vaccinated?

- New travel guidance from the CDC says that fully vaccinated people can travel safely within the U.S. when following all the necessary safety measures.
 - Travelers will still be required to wear a mask on planes, buses, trains and other forms of public transportation.
 - If you are travelling domestically, you don't need to get a COVID-19 test or quarantine after travel.
- When traveling internationally, be aware of your airline and destination's quarantine and testing requirements, and follow these.
 - Fully vaccinated individuals should be tested 3-5 days after travel, but do not need to self-quarantine.
- Regardless of vaccination status, all travelers should still follow current mitigation techniques while traveling including mask wearing, social distancing and hand hygiene.
- If you plan to travel, you should get a COVID-19 test to reduce the risk of spreading the virus, particularly for college students returning home.
 - All individuals, regardless of vaccination status, should also monitor for COVID-19 symptoms after travel. If you have symptoms, you should get tested and stay home.

What precautions do I need to follow if I haven't been able to get the vaccine yet/if I don't plan to get the vaccine?

- If you are not vaccinated, we recommend you keep following the usual safety precautions: wear a mask, wash your hands and watch your distance.
- You should also avoid gathering with others outside of your household and limit unnecessary outings and travel as much as possible.
- Unvaccinated travelers should:
 - Get tested 1-3 days prior to travel.
 - Get tested 3-5 days after travel and self-quarantine for 7 days with a negative test.

- This may change as more Oklahomans get the vaccine, but for the time being, you and others are at risk from COVID-19.
- The best way to protect yourself and others is by continuing to take precautions.