FACTS ABOUT THE COVID-19 VACCINE

February, 2021

What do vaccines do?

When a vaccine for a virus is injected, the body creates antibodies to fight the virus. It then fights the virus if you are ever exposed to it in the future.

Can the vaccine give me the virus?

NO

There is no way to get COVID-19 from the vaccine. The vaccine is not made from live virus.

What does the vaccine cost?

The vaccine is FREE to everyone.

You may be asked to provide information about your insurance. This is because providers can receive reimbursement for a vaccination fee.

How does the vaccine work?

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines work in similar ways.

- The virus has proteins on the outside of the virus.
- The mRNA COVID-19 vaccines tell your body to temporarily make this protein so your body reacts and makes antibodies to the protein.
- If you get exposed to the virus, your body will now recognize and attack this protein that is on the outside of the virus. In this way it destroys the virus.
- The COVID-19 vaccines **DO NOT** *enter or change* your DNA.

Will the vaccines work for new strains of the virus?

Experts think it's likely that both the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccines will be effective against all currently circulating strains of the coronavirus/COVID-19. Scientists and vaccine makers are continuing to monitor this issue.

How effective are the COVID-19 vaccines?

95%
EFFECTIVE

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are the mRNA vaccines approved in the U.S. Both are about **95% effective** in preventing people from getting sick with COVID-19.

How many doses do I need of the vaccine?

2 DOSES	**Second dose:** Should happen 3-6 weeks after the first dose.	**Highest protection:** 2 weeks after your second vaccine dose.	We do not yet know for how long this protection lasts.

Has the development of the vaccine been rushed?

NO

Scientists have been developing mRNA vaccines for more than 10 years. Scientists, companies and governments came together to develop vaccines to prevent more people from getting sick. Tens of thousands of people volunteered to test them.

Side effects of the vaccines !

Side effects are expected and are a sign that the vaccine is working.

- **Common side effects**: mild pain, redness and swelling in the arm that the vaccine was administered.
- **May also experience:** fatigue/tiredness, chills, joint pain, headache or a low-grade fever.
    - The side effects seem to be worse after the second dose of the vaccine is administered and last about 24 hours but can last a few days.
    - These side effects are expected and are a sign that the vaccine is working.

Severe side effects are rare.

If they happen, they would typically appear in the first 15 to 30 minutes after getting the vaccine. A possible severe side effect is anaphylaxis or trouble breathing, a severe allergic reaction. This is more likely to happen to people who have a history of this type of reaction to vaccines.

Should pregnant women get the vaccine?

- The virus seems to cause more harm in pregnant women than in those of the same age who are not pregnant.
  - Currently, the vaccine is recommended for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding.
    - The risks are thought to be small, but are not totally known.
    - It is a personal choice. Talk with your health care provider.
- Even if you get the vaccine, it is important to wear masks, wash hands, and physically distance when caring for yourself and your baby.

YES — Should people who have health conditions get the COVID-19 vaccine?

(i.e., hypertension, diabetes, sickle cell disease, cancer)

- It is safe for people with health conditions.
- Talk with your provider about your concerns before getting the vaccine.
- It is important that people with health conditions get the vaccine. Research shows they are more likely to develop severe disease if they develop COVID-19.

After I get the vaccine, can I stop wearing a mask or staying 6-feet away from other people?

NO! **Please continue to wear a mask, stay 6 feet away from other people and wash your hands often.**

- Even after the 2nd dose, you might still be able to carry the virus to other people if you get exposed.
- There is still a small chance that some people might not be fully protected even after two doses.

I would like to wait to get the vaccine to see what happens with other people.

Please get the vaccine as soon as it is available to you.
The vaccines have been tested on tens of thousands of people. We know that the vaccines are safe and effective. You are not being asked to participate in a study. The studies have already been done.

What about kids?

The vaccine is not available to children under the age of 16.

- Children were not included in the first studies.
- There are studies of these vaccines going on now that will determine if the vaccines are safe and effective for kids.
- Results are expected in mid-2021.

I have already had COVID. Should I still get the vaccine?

YES You should wait until you are completely recovered.

What if I have a history of bad reactions to vaccines?

People with a history of anaphylaxis to the COVID-19 mRNA vaccine or to ingredients in the vaccine should not be vaccinated.

However, people with a history of anaphylaxis to other vaccines, medications or foods should get the vaccine.

- Get the vaccine in a facility prepared to deal with an anaphylactic reaction.
- People with a history of anaphylaxis should talk to their health care provider and notify the vaccine center of their history of anaphylaxis before getting the vaccine.

When will life get back to normal?

It will take some time to get back to having less restrictions. A large majority of our community will need to be vaccinated for this to be easier to happen. This is a difficult goal, and we need everyone's participation to get closer to it.

We ALL need to continue to wear masks and practice physical distancing. This includes people who have received the vaccine.

For more information, visit: cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html
mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine

Endorsing Groups: City of Worcester • UMass Medical School • Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center • Family Health Center of Worcester • St. Vincent Hospital • Fallon Health • Reliant Medical Group