

COVID-19 Vaccination: Questions and Answers for Family Planning Clients

What's the COVID-19 vaccine?

COVID-19 vaccines are shots that can protect you against COVID-19 infection, which can cause serious illness and even death. Because no vaccine is 100% effective, there's a chance that you may still catch COVID-19 after vaccination. The vaccines are particularly good at preventing severe COVID, hospitalization and death. If you're fully vaccinated but become infected, your chances of having to go to the hospital are extremely low. Being vaccinated lowers your chances of spreading COVID-19 to others.

Everyone 5 years of age and older can get the COVID-19 vaccine. Three vaccines are available:

- The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine is 2-doses, spaced 4 weeks apart.
- The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is 2 doses, spaced 3 weeks apart.
- The Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) vaccine is officially only 1 dose, although a booster is recommended after 2 months.

It takes 2 weeks after you finish getting vaccinated for your body to be protected against COVID-19. Boosters are recommended for some people six months after the Pfizer or Moderna vaccination.

These vaccines are effective and safe. If you haven't been vaccinated yet, get vaccinated as soon as you can.

How much does the COVID-19 vaccine cost?

COVID-19 vaccines are free. You don't need health insurance and your immigration status doesn't matter.

How do I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

You can get a COVID-19 vaccine at drugstores, community health centers, many doctors' offices, and county-run sites. You may have to make an appointment, but some places offer walk-ins.

You can find places to get vaccinated in California by going to: <https://myturn.ca.gov/>. You also can schedule second shots, booster shots, and even arrange for free transportation.

Can I get the COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines at the same time?

Yes. You can get the COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines like the flu or HPV vaccine at the same time.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?

Yes. Like all vaccines, COVID-19 vaccines were carefully tested before they were approved. People of different ages, races, ethnicities, and with different medical conditions were studied. Hundreds of millions of people have received these vaccines in the U.S. and other countries and the safety record is

excellent. Authorities here and in many countries are monitoring both the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine over time.

You can't get COVID-19 from the vaccine. They don't change your DNA or cause any permanent changes in your body.

Does the COVID-19 vaccine cause infertility, sterility, or miscarriage?

No. Research shows that COVID-19 vaccines don't make you sterile, affect your fertility, or cause miscarriage or problems in pregnancy.

There have been false claims that the COVID-19 vaccine causes infertility in females and males — this is NOT true and isn't based on any science or research. The vaccine trains your immune systems to attack the virus without attacking your internal organs.

How does COVID-19 infection affect a pregnant person?

People who are pregnant or have been pregnant recently are more likely to get very sick or to die from COVID-19 than people who aren't pregnant. Also, pregnant people who have COVID-19 may have an increased risk of pregnancy complications, like early birth. It's important for pregnant people and anyone they live with to stay as healthy as possible and to take steps to avoid being exposed to COVID-19 and other illnesses.

Is it safe to get the COVID-19 vaccine if I'm pregnant?

Yes. Research shows that the COVID-19 vaccine is safe for pregnant people and has no effect on their babies.

If you are trying to become pregnant or may want to become pregnant, you should receive COVID-19 vaccination. There is no need for a pregnancy test before receiving a COVID-19 vaccine shot.

If you get pregnant after your first shot of a COVID-19 vaccine that requires two doses, you should get your second shot to get as much protection as possible. A booster shot will give you even more protection over a longer time period.

Is it safe to get the COVID-19 vaccine if I'm breastfeeding?

Yes, the vaccines are safe in breastfeeding. In fact, vaccination may help protect your baby from COVID-19 because it is normal for mothers to pass antibodies to infants in breast milk. You can read more about COVID-19 vaccine safety for pregnant and breastfeeding people on the CDC website.

Will the COVID-19 vaccine cause autism or other problems with children I have in the future?

No. Vaccines do not cause autism. COVID-19 vaccines do not change your DNA. Your body gets rid of the vaccine once it's done using it to learn how to build up immunity to COVID-19. Nothing from the vaccines can be passed down genetically to children.

Can the COVID-19 vaccine affect my period?

Scientists didn't study the vaccine's impact on menstrual periods, but there's no reason to think that vaccines can have a big effect on your period.

Lots of things can make your period lighter, heavier, or come at a different time than you'd expect — like stress, being sick, taking certain medicines, and hormonal changes.

Does the COVID-19 vaccine affect birth control?

No. Vaccines do not affect birth control or fertility in any way.

Does the COVID-19 vaccine affect medicines used for sexually transmitted infections?

No. The COVID-19 and other vaccines have no effect on antibiotics against bacterial infections.

Can the COVID-19 vaccine affect mammograms?

A small number of people have had harmless short-lived swelling in their armpit lymph nodes after getting the COVID-19 vaccine, but this is very rare. This swelling may look similar to breast cancer on a mammogram, which can cause a false result. The COVID-19 vaccine does NOT cause breast cancer.

If you're due for a mammogram, try to schedule your screening before your first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, or 4-6 weeks after your last dose. But don't skip your mammogram altogether because of your vaccine.

Other valuable information about COVID-19 and Family Planning

Can you get COVID-19 from sex?

You can get COVID-19 if you're close to someone with COVID-19 so physical contact, intimate activities with someone who has COVID-19, is very risky for infection. Remember that people may not know that they are carrying the virus.

The COVID-19 virus can be found in feces (poop) of people who are infected. We don't know if it can be spread this way. We recommend that people refrain from sexual activities that could expose them to fecal matter, including unprotected oral sex on an anus, or putting a penis or sex toy in your mouth. If you do choose to engage in these sexual activities, remember to be extra cautious and use condoms/dental dams and/or follow proper sanitation protocol to properly clean your sex toys before each sexual encounter to protect you and your partner(s).

Again, some people with COVID-19 do not have symptoms or their symptoms may be mild. You can't know for sure if someone has COVID-19 based on how they look or feel.

How can I safely have sex during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The best way to prevent COVID-19 is to get the COVID-19 vaccine. If you're fully vaccinated, it's mostly safe for you to have sex and other types of close physical contact with other people who are also vaccinated. If you're not vaccinated, try to avoid close, physical contact — including sex — with people who don't live with you (especially if they're also unvaccinated).

If you or your partner are feeling sick or think you may have been exposed to COVID-19, get tested for COVID-19.

How do I protect myself from unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections during the pandemic?

Using condoms will help protect you and your partners from most types of sexually transmitted infections. You also can use condoms to prevent pregnancy if you can't get your regular birth control method on time.

If you make a birth control mistake, you can use emergency contraceptive pills (the "morning after pill") to help prevent pregnancy up to five days after unprotected sex. You can get the morning-after pill at most family planning clinics or at a drugstore. If you are a Family PACT client, the program covers the cost of emergency contraceptive pills from a drug store if it is prescribed by your clinician.

This Q/A was adapted from:

Planned Parenthood Coronavirus Information

<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/health-and-wellness/covid-19-new-coronavirus>

CDC: COVID-19 Vaccines for People Who Would Like to Have a Baby

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/planning-for-pregnancy.html>

CDC: COVID-19 and Pregnant and Recently Pregnant People

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/pregnant-people.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html>

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG)

<https://www.acog.org/covid-19/covid-19-vaccines-tools-for-your-practice-and-your-patients>

California Department of Public Health: Guidance for Vaccination During Pregnancy

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Vaccination-During-Pregnancy-Guidance.aspx>