



Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ Individuals 12 Years and Older



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Huntsville Hospital Health System began administering the COVID-19 vaccine in December 2020. Here are some frequently asked questions regarding the available vaccines.

GENERAL VACCINE INFORMATION

1. Tell me about the vaccine.

COMIRNATY is an FDA-approved COVID-19 vaccine made by Pfizer for BioNTech. It is approved for use as a two-dose primary series for the prevention of COVID-19 in individuals 12 years of age and older. It is also authorized under emergency use to provide a third primary series dose to individuals 12 years of age and older who have certain conditions that weaken their immune system.

On August 31, 2022, the FDA issued an Emergency Use Authorization for an updated Pfizer-BioNTech Bivalent (Original and Omicron BA.4/BA.5) COVID-19 vaccine that provides immunization against the original COVID-19 virus plus the newer, more prevalent, Omicron variants. This new bivalent vaccine is authorized for use in individuals 12 years of age and older as a single booster dose administered at least two months after completion of a primary vaccination series with any authorized monovalent COVID-19 vaccine, or at least two months after the most recent booster dose with any authorized monovalent COVID-19 vaccine.

For more vaccine details, see the table below:

Type of vaccine	<p>Uses mRNA (messenger RNA) technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • does NOT contain any part of the virus (live or inactive) • is NOT grown in eggs (it is OK to take if you have egg allergies)
Side effects (short-term)	<p>Most common side effects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pain at injection site • tiredness • headache • muscle/joint pain • fever/chills <p>Most are mild-to-moderate and are a sign that the vaccine is working to help fight off COVID-19 infections</p>
Side effects (long-term)	<p>Side effects generally happen within six weeks of receiving a vaccine dose. Long-term side effects are rare with the mRNA COVID-19 vaccines. There have been cases of myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) and pericarditis (inflammation of the tissue around the heart) reported after receiving the Pfizer vaccine, particularly in adolescent males and adult males under 40 years of age. The chance of having this occur is very low. You should seek medical attention right away if you have any of the following symptoms after receiving the vaccine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • chest pain • shortness of breath • feelings of having a fast-beating, fluttering, or pounding heart
Effectiveness	<p>~ 71.1% effective in people 12 to 15 years of age ~ 62.8% effective in people 16 years of age and older</p>
Age	FDA-approved for individuals 12 years of age and older
Pregnancy and lactation	COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, trying to get pregnant now, or who might become pregnant in the future

2. What are the precautions in pregnant/lactating patients, or those planning to get pregnant?

Evidence about the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy has been growing, and it suggests that the benefits of receiving a COVID-19 vaccine outweigh any known or potential risks of vaccination during pregnancy. The CDC recommends COVID-19 vaccination for people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, trying to get pregnant now, or who might become pregnant in the future.

3. Should people with a history of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in adults (MIS-A) receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

Currently, there is no data on the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines in people with a history of MIS-A. It is not known if people with a history of MIS-A are at risk of recurrence of the same immune response following reinfection with COVID or in response to the vaccine. A conversation with your health care provider may assist with decisions about receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. If someone has been diagnosed with MIS-A, they should consider delaying vaccination until they have recovered from their illness and for 90 days after the date of diagnosis of MIS-A.

4. Is there one vaccine that is recommended over the others?

The CDC recommends individuals receive an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine over Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine. This recommendation was made based on vaccine effectiveness, vaccine safety and rare adverse events. However, receiving any vaccine is better than being unvaccinated.

PRIMARY VACCINE SERIES PROCESS

5. Is a single shot of the Pfizer vaccine still protective?

No, a follow-up injection is required.

6. When do I receive the second dose?

The second dose is recommended 3 to 8 weeks after the first dose is administered. In individuals with certain conditions that weaken their immune system or those who need rapid protection, it is recommended to receive the second dose 3 weeks after the first dose. A longer interval of 8 weeks may be optimal for other individuals. If the second dose is administered beyond this interval, it is not recommended to start the two-dose series over again.

7. How will I be reminded of the second dose?

You will receive a reminder card after receiving your first dose (make sure you get a card before you leave the vaccination clinic). We recommend that you take a picture of your reminder card as a back-up AND add the date to your calendar.

8. What happens if I miss the second shot?

Two shots are needed; the second shot is required for immunity. If you miss the recommended second dose window, you should receive your follow-up dose as soon as possible.

9. Who is eligible to get a third dose in their primary vaccine series?

A third dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is recommended after receiving two doses of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine in people with a weak immune system. Experts suggest the following patients get a three-dose primary series:

- Patients being treated for tumors or cancers of the blood
- Patients who have had solid-organ transplants and are taking medicine to suppress the immune system
- Patients who have had stem cell transplant within the last two years or are taking medicine to suppress the immune system
- Patients with moderate or severe primary immunodeficiency (e.g., DiGeorge, Wiskott-Aldrich syndromes)
- Patients with advanced or untreated HIV infection
- Patients being treated with high-dose steroids or other drugs that may suppress the immune system

10. How do I show I am eligible to get a three-dose primary series?

You will be asked to sign a consent form. You do not need to complete a vaccine attestation form or have a physician's order to be eligible.

11. When should I get a third dose if I am eligible?

The third dose of your primary vaccine series should be given at least four weeks after receiving the second dose of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.

12. Does it matter which vaccine I get as a third dose?

Yes. The third dose should be the same mRNA vaccine as the first two doses. If you have received two doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, then you should receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine as a third dose.

BOOSTER DOSES

13. What is a booster dose?

A booster dose is given when a patient's strong protection to the virus has decreased or gone away. An example of a vaccine that requires a "booster dose" is the tetanus shot, and that is because over time (10 years for the tetanus shot) a person's protection is expected to decrease.

14. Are booster doses recommended for the prevention of COVID-19?

Yes. The CDC recommends that all individuals 12 years of age and older receive a booster with the updated Pfizer bivalent vaccine.

15. When should I get a booster dose if I am eligible?

Booster doses should be given at least two months after the completion of a primary vaccination series with an approved monovalent COVID-19 vaccine, or at least two months after a booster dose with an approved monovalent COVID-19 vaccine.

16. How do I show I am eligible to get a booster dose?

You will be asked to sign a consent form. You do not need to complete a vaccine attestation form or have a physician's order to be eligible.

17. Does it matter which vaccine I get as a booster dose?

Yes. Only the updated bivalent COVID-19 vaccine can be used as a booster dose.

COVID-19 TIMING

18. If I have already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated?

Yes. Since natural immunity from having COVID-19 may not last very long, you should still get the COVID-19 vaccine.

19. How long do I have to wait between having COVID-19 and taking the COVID-19 vaccine to decrease the possibility of getting it again?

You should wait to be vaccinated until after you complete your isolation period (at least five full days from the first day of symptom onset or the date of the day of your positive COVID-19 test). Additionally, you *may* consider delaying your next vaccine by three months from when your symptoms started or, if you had no symptoms, when you received a positive test.

20. If I have other symptoms of being ill now, how long should I wait before getting the vaccine?

It is recommended to be symptom free before taking the COVID-19 vaccine.

21. How many days do I have to wait between taking a routine vaccine and the COVID-19 vaccine?

COVID-19 vaccines and other vaccines may be administered without regard to timing. This includes simultaneous administration of the COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines, including a flu vaccine, at the same visit.

22. I received one of the new monoclonal formulations or convalescent plasma. Am I allowed to take the COVID-19 vaccine after that treatment?

COVID-19 vaccines can be given any time after receiving one of the monoclonal formulations or convalescent plasma as long as your isolation period is complete (at least five full days from the first day of symptom onset).

23. I have received the first dose of the vaccine series and now have tested positive. Do I go ahead and receive the second dose on schedule?

No, you need to reschedule your appointment for after your isolation period is complete (at least five full days from the first day of symptom onset). If asymptomatic, reschedule your appointment for at least five full days from the date of the day of your positive COVID-19 test.

24. Can I take the vaccine if I have pre-existing conditions such as diabetes, cancer or hepatitis?

Yes.

MISCELLANEOUS

25. Are gloves required during vaccine administration?

Per the CDC and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), gloves are NOT required to be worn while administering vaccines.

26. Should I take acetaminophen or ibuprofen before or at the time of the vaccine?

It is recommended NOT to use fever medications (acetaminophen, ibuprofen, etc.) before or at the time of vaccination. After the 15-30 minute vaccination observation period, if you begin to experience mild-to-moderate

injection-related effects (pain at site of injection, muscle/joint pain, moderate fever, etc.), you may take the medicine(s) you normally take for this type of symptom relief.

27. Am I still considered up to date if I don't get an updated booster shot?

No. You are considered up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines when you have received all doses in the primary series and an updated bivalent booster.