

Patient Education

COVID-19 After You Have Been Vaccinated

You must carefully read the "Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer" below in order to understand and correctly use this information

About this topic

Coronavirus disease 2019 or COVID-19 is a virus that spreads easily from person to person. In 2020, there were a few kinds of vaccines developed to help prevent COVID-19. You are fully vaccinated when it has been more than 2 weeks since you were given the second dose of a 2-dose series of shots or more than 2 weeks since you were given a single dose vaccine. Right after you get a booster dose, you are up to date on your COVID-19 vaccine. Boosters are only available for people over the age of 12. Until you are up to date on your COVID-19 vaccine, it is important that you keep up with your normal safety measures.

Most of the time, when you are fully vaccinated, it is still important to take steps to protect yourself and others.

- You may still be required to wear a mask or practice social distancing, based on local guidelines and the number of local COVID cases. If you are around others who are at a higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19, you should all wear masks.
- You may need to be tested before or after travel. You also need to watch for symptoms of COVID-19 after travel. Rules around testing and quarantine may be different, based on where you are going.

If you have a weak immune system, you may not be fully protected from COVID-19, even if you are fully vaccinated. Take all the precautions you would if you had not received a vaccine. This includes wearing a well-fitted mask over your nose and mouth and social distancing. Respirator masks like N95 and KN95 can filter out even very tiny air particles. With any type of mask you use, it's important that it fit snugly over your face with no gaps. You can help the fit by using a mask with an adjustable nose wire, adjusting or knotting the ear loops to make it tighter, or wearing a cloth mask on top of a disposable mask.

If you have been around someone with COVID-19, watch for symptoms. Get tested at least 5 days after you are exposed, even if you don't have symptoms. Wear a mask in public for 10 days or until you have a negative COVID-19 test.

General

Many people want life to go back to normal after they have gotten a COVID-19 vaccine. Sadly, that is not the case.

Why do I still need to be careful if I have had all the doses of the vaccine?

Your body takes time to build up immunity to the virus. This means you are not fully protected right after your first or second shot. Most of the time, it takes your body a week or 2 after the last dose to become protected.

New strains of the virus are found all the time. Doctors do not know for sure how a COVID vaccine will work against new strains. The vaccine or booster you received may not work against the new strain. Also, doctors don't know how long protection from a COVID-19 vaccine will last.

If you are over 12 years old, you can get a booster dose of the vaccine after you are fully vaccinated. This is an extra shot given to help improve your immunity to the virus. Talk with your doctor about when you should get a booster.

Vaccines work best when most of the people in a country have gotten them. Then the risk for getting the disease to the whole country goes down. All people are safer when you get a vaccine.

Can I spend time with my family and friends?

You are much less likely to get seriously ill or to spread COVID-19 if you are up to date on your COVID-19 vaccines. For some activities, you may need to show proof of your vaccines. You may want to do a home COVID-19 test before some activities. You may want to wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an area where there are a lot of cases of COVID-19. You may also want to wear a mask if you are around people who could become very sick if they get COVID-19.

Do I need to quarantine if I am exposed to someone with COVID-19?

You do not need to quarantine if:

- You are fully vaccinated **and**
- You have not had any symptoms of COVID-19 since you were exposed.

If you have not finished all the shots in your vaccine series, you should quarantine at home for 5 full days. Also quarantine at home if you have symptoms of COVID-19.

If you are exposed to COVID-19, get tested at least 5 days after you are exposed. Watch for symptoms for 10 days, even if you are fully vaccinated. Wear a mask in public for 10 days or until you have a negative COVID-19 test.

What about travel?

You may need to quarantine or have a COVID-19 test before or after your travel. Some places will require you to have a negative COVID-19 test before you travel. It is important to know that new strains of the COVID-19 virus are developing all around the world. If you travel, do your best to stay away from crowds, wear a well-fitting mask as recommended and wash your hands often.

What should I do if I am in an area where there are a lot of COVID-19 cases?

You may want to wear a well-fitting mask over your nose and mouth if you are in a crowded area or are around people who have not had a vaccine. Respirator masks like N95 and KN95 can filter out even very

tiny air particles. With any type of mask you use, it's important that it fit snugly over your face with no gaps. Also, wash your hands often and practice social distancing.

What should I do now?

Continue to help protect yourself and others.

- Wear a face mask over your nose and mouth if you are required to by local guidelines. Respirator masks like N95 and KN95 can filter out even very tiny air particles. With any type of mask you use, it's important that it fit snugly over your face with no gaps.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you cough or sneeze. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60 percent alcohol if soap and water are not available. Rub your hands with the sanitizer for at least 20 seconds.

Where can I learn more?

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/participate-in-activities.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>

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