



# Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccine FAQs

Updated 01/15/2021



Huntsville Hospital Health System has begun administering the COVID-19 vaccine. Here are some frequently asked questions regarding the available vaccines.

## GENERAL VACCINE INFORMATION

### 1. Tell me about the vaccine.

The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine has the following features:

Type of vaccine	Uses mRNA (messenger RNA) technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does NOT contain any part of the virus (live or inactive)</li> <li>• is NOT grown in eggs (it is OK to take if you have egg allergies)</li> </ul>
Side effects (short-term)	Most common side effects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pain at injection site</li> <li>• tiredness</li> <li>• headache</li> <li>• muscle/joint pain</li> <li>• fever</li> </ul> Most are mild-to-moderate and are a sign that the vaccine is making antibodies to help fight off COVID-19 infections
Side effects (long-term)	No serious safety concerns seen with 2-month follow up monitoring
Effectiveness	Approximately 95% effective in preventing COVID-19
Dosing	Requires 2 intramuscular injections, approximately 3 weeks apart
Age	Age 16 and older
Pregnancy and lactation	Not specifically studied; talk to your provider about risks vs. benefits
Storage	Frozen at (-) 80 degrees Celsius; brought to room temperature before injection

### 2. Was the vaccine rushed? What can you tell me about mRNA developed vaccines?

The Pfizer vaccine was developed using a new mRNA technology. Even though these are the first vaccines released using this approach, this technology has been studied in research labs within the U.S. for more than three decades. Also, the vaccine process is happening faster because vaccine research and development, clinical trials, manufacturing, and plans for distribution are occurring at the same time. This method has eliminated delays that occur when the processes are carried out one after the other.

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

The safety and effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine in children under 16 years old has not been established. Pregnant and lactating patients were not included in the clinical trials for the COVID-19 vaccines, which is why the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) says there is not enough data to recommend vaccination in these populations at this time. However, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommends not withholding the vaccination and for the provider and patient to discuss the risks vs. benefits on an individual basis. This recommendation is also supported by CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).

## VACCINE PROCESS

### 4. Is a single shot of the vaccine still protective?

No, a follow-up injection is required. If you are not able to receive the second dose as recommended (21 days later for the Pfizer vaccine), you should get the second shot as soon as possible. It is not recommended to start the two-dose series over again.

### 5. How will I be reminded of the second dose?

You will receive a reminder card after receiving your first dose (make sure you get one 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.

**6. 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.

**IMMUNITY**

**7. How long does it take immunity to develop fully after vaccination?**

It typically takes a few weeks for your body to build immunity after vaccination. That means it is possible a person could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 and get sick just before or just after vaccination. This is because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection.

**8. How long does the immunity last?**

At this time, experts do not know how long someone is protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. The immunity someone gains from having an infection, called natural immunity, varies from person to person. Some early evidence suggests natural immunity (from having COVID-19) may not last very long.

**COVID-19 TIMING**

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

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

**10. 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?**

Based on expert opinion, you may receive the vaccine 6 weeks after you have fully recovered from COVID-19. Taking the vaccine decreases your chance of getting it a second time.

**11. 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.

**12. How many days do I have to wait between taking the flu vaccine and the COVID-19 vaccine?**

The vaccine series should be administered alone, with a minimum of 14 days before or after administration of any other vaccines.

**13. I did not get a flu vaccine this year. Am I allowed to take the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Yes, declining the flu vaccine does not prohibit you from taking the COVID-19 vaccine when it is offered to you.

**14. I received one of the new monoclonal formulations. Am I allowed to take the COVID-19 vaccine after that treatment?**

Based on expert opinion, you may receive the COVID-19 vaccine after monoclonal COVID-19 treatment as long as you wait 90 days after your infusion date AND you must be fully recovered from COVID-19 for 6 weeks prior to getting the vaccine.

**15. 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?**

Yes. The second dose should be taken on the due date or as soon as you are no longer experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, whichever is later.

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

Yes.

**MISCELLANEOUS**

**17. Will I need to wear a mask and social distance once I have received two doses of the vaccine?**

Yes.

**18. 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.

**19. 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.