

# What to Expect after Getting the COVID-19 Vaccine

---

COVID-19 vaccine will help protect you from getting COVID-19. You may have some side effects, which are normal signs that your body is building protection. These side effects may feel like flu and even affect your ability to do daily activities, but they should go away in a few days. If you do not experience any side effects, be assured that the vaccine is just as effective.

## What are the most common side effects?

On the arm where you got the shot:

- Pain
- Swelling
- Redness of the skin

Throughout the rest of your body:

- Tiredness
- Headache
- Chills
- Fever
- Muscle pain
- Nausea

The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) is implementing a new smartphone-based tool called v-safe to check-in on people's health after they receive a COVID-19 vaccine. After enrolling you will be able to use your smartphone to tell CDC about any side effects after getting the COVID-19 vaccine. To learn more visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/vsafe>. If you do not have a smartphone, you can report any side effects at <https://vaers.hhs.gov>.

## Helpful tips

Talk to your health care provider about taking over-the-counter medicine, such as ibuprofen, acetaminophen, aspirin, or antihistamines, for any pain and discomfort you may have after getting the vaccine. You can take these medications to relieve post-vaccination side effects if you have no other medical reasons that prevent you from taking these medications normally.

It is not recommended you take these medicines before vaccination for the purpose of trying to prevent side effects.

### **What are my care instructions?**

To reduce pain and discomfort where you got the shot:

- Apply a clean, cool, wet washcloth over the area.
- Use or exercise your arm.

To reduce discomfort from fever:

- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Dress lightly.

### **When should I call the doctor?**

In most cases, discomfort from fever or pain is normal. Contact your doctor or healthcare provider if you have:

- Redness or tenderness where you got the shot that increased after 24 hours
- Side effects are worrying you or do not seem to be going away after a few days

### **How many shots do I need to get?**

- Pfizer and Moderna (mRNA COVID-19 vaccines) - you will need **2 shots** in order to get the most protection. You should get the second shot even if you have side effects after the first shot unless a vaccination provider or your doctor tells you not to get it.
- Janssen vaccine (viral vector COVID-19 vaccine) - you will only need 1 shot.

### **How soon will I get the maximum protection from the vaccine?**

It takes time for your body to build protection after any vaccination.

- Pfizer and Moderna vaccines that require 2 shots may not protect you until about 2 weeks after your second shot.
- Janssen vaccine that requires 1 shot may not protect you until about 2 weeks after vaccination.

## **Do I need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others if I have received 2 doses of the vaccine?**

You are considered fully vaccinated 2 weeks after the second dose in a 2-dose series like the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or 2 weeks after the single-dose vaccine like the Janssen vaccine. People who have been fully vaccinated can start to do some things that they had stopped doing because of the pandemic. While experts learn more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide under real-life conditions, the CDC will update its guidelines frequently. Please visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html> to see the most current guidelines about what fully-vaccinated people can do.

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by Michigan Medicine for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by Michigan Medicine and for which Michigan Medicine does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Adapted from: CDC. What to Expect after Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine. Access at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/expect/after.html>

Approved by: COVID19 Vaccine Patient Education/Communication Workgroup

Patient Education by [Michigan Medicine](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License](#). Last Revised 3/11/2021