

COVID-19 Vaccine: Care Instructions



Overview

The COVID-19 vaccine can help you avoid getting COVID-19.

The number of doses you need depends on which vaccine you get. It also depends on your age and health. Most people also need "booster" doses later to help them stay protected. You are considered to be up to date on your COVID-19 vaccines when you've received all the recommended doses and booster doses.

The vaccine prevents many cases of COVID-19. But if you do still catch COVID-19, your symptoms will probably be less severe than if you hadn't gotten the vaccine. You can't get COVID-19 from the vaccine.

What are the side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine?

You might not have side effects. But if you do, they'll probably be like those of other vaccines, including:

- Fever.
- Soreness.
- Feeling very tired.

This is normal. Your body is building protection against COVID-19.

You may also have other side effects, including:

- Chills.
- Headache.
- Pain, redness, a rash, or swelling in the arm where you had the vaccine.
- Swollen lymph nodes in the armpit of the arm where you had the vaccine.
- Nausea.

Side effects will likely go away in a few days. Until then, it may be harder to do your usual activities.

If you think you've been exposed to COVID-19 or have symptoms like a cough, trouble breathing, or a new

loss of smell or taste, call your doctor. These aren't vaccine side effects. You need a COVID-19 test.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- If you have a sore arm or a fever after getting the COVID-19 vaccine, you can take an over-the-counter pain medicine, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin). Read and follow all instructions on the label. Do not give aspirin to anyone younger than 20. It has been linked to Reye syndrome, a serious illness.
- Put ice or a cold pack on the sore area for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin.
- If you have side effects, such as a fever, be sure to get enough rest and drink plenty of fluids.

When should you call for help?



Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if after getting the COVID-19 vaccine:

- You have symptoms of a severe reaction to the vaccine. Symptoms of a severe reaction may include:
 - Severe difficulty breathing.
 - Sudden raised, red areas (hives) all over your body.
 - Severe lightheadedness.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have one or more of these symptoms within several weeks of getting a COVID-19 vaccine.
 - Severe headache that does not go away.
 - Shortness of breath.
 - Chest pain, or a feeling of a fast-beating, fluttering, or pounding heart.
 - Weakness or tingling sensations, especially in the legs or arms.
 - Problems walking.
 - Problems speaking, chewing, or swallowing.
 - Blurred or double vision or other problems with your eyes.
 - Losing bladder control or having bowel problems.
 - Abdominal pain that does not go away.
 - Pain, redness, or swelling in the leg.
 - Bruising or tiny spots under the skin that's not near where you got the vaccine.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if you have any problems.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/PatientEd>

Enter **C126** in the search box to learn more about "**COVID-19 Vaccine: Care Instructions**".

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