COVID VACCINE Q&A FOR PHILLY FAMILIES

How long will the current vaccines remain effective?

Right now, we know the COVID-19 vaccines are effective for at least 6 months, but it's likely the protection you get from these vaccines will last longer. Researchers are still learning more about this. It is possible that you may need a booster dose of the vaccine in the future.

Is it safe to send kids back to school?

It is safe to send kids back to school when all teachers, parents, staff, and students wear masks indoors and social distance while in school. We recommend that you review your school's COVID-19 safety plans. You may also want to ask your school about in-person, virtual, and hybrid education options.

Is the Johnson & Johnson vaccine safe?

Yes. Safety of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine was reviewed recently by the Food & Drug Administration, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other experts. There were reports that the vaccine could cause blood clots. As of May 12, 2021 over 9 million people had received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and there were only 28 cases of blood clots, meaning this side effect is very rare. Please talk to your healthcare provider if you have any more questions or concerns about the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

How can we talk to people who are hesitant about getting the COVID-19 vaccine?

First, listen to your friends and family members who are unsure if they should get the vaccine. Let them know how much you care and want them to be safe and healthy. Encourage them to talk to a trusted doctor or nurse so they can get the right information they need to make the right decision.

Am I protected if I only received one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine?

One dose of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines will provide some protection, but two doses are recommended for full protection. You are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after your second vaccine. You only need one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

What should I do if I miss my second dose?

Depending on the vaccine you received, you should get your second vaccine about 3-4 weeks after the first one. If more than 6 weeks have passed you should contact your healthcare provider as soon as possible. Ask if and when you can schedule an appointment for your second dose.

How do the COVID-19 vaccines work?

Vaccines prepare your immune system so your body can respond quickly when exposed to COVID-19. This reduces your chances of getting sick.

The COVID-19 virus is covered in microscopic spikes or proteins. The COVID-19 vaccines teach your body to recognize and protect against these protein spikes, which gives you protection from the virus. The vaccines do not contain the virus and you cannot get the virus from the vaccine. The vaccines train your body to recognize and react to the virus without ever exposing you to it.

Is it necessary to have a COVID-19 test prior to getting the vaccine?

No. You do not need a COVID-19 test before getting the vaccine unless you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or were recently in close contact with someone who has COVID-19.

How do they measure how effective the vaccine is against the virus?

Health experts use a number of ways to learn about vaccines. First, all vaccines are tested in clinical trials. First, vaccines are tested for safety in small groups of people, then bigger groups. Next, vaccines are tested for whether or not they work. Researchers compare a group of people who received the vaccine with a group of people who did not. That helps determine whether or not the vaccine is working and protecting the people who were vaccinated.

Vaccines continue to be researched even after they are approved and administered. This information helps experts quickly identify problems, improve vaccines, and ensure that they are safe and effective.

Is the vaccine available for children?

Yes. Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine is available for children ages 12 and up.

Has the vaccine been tested for safety and effectiveness in people of color?

Yes. The clinical trials that tested the safety and effectiveness of all three COVID-19 vaccines included about 12,500 Black participants total. There were also large numbers of Hispanic/Latino people and other participants of color. All vaccines are safe and effective for Black, Hispanic/Latino, and other people of color.

Is the vaccine worth getting if not everyone in your household can get it at this time?

Yes. When you get vaccinated you are not only protecting yourself, but you're also protecting your friends and family members as well. When you are vaccinated it means it's less likely you will spread COVID-19 to those around you.

Does getting the vaccine mean you won't get COVID at all?

The COVID-19 vaccines will completely prevent COVID-19 for most people. No vaccine is 100% effective. For some people the vaccine will give them some but not complete protection, meaning they may still get sick, but it won't be as bad if they weren't vaccinated. For a small number of people the vaccine will not work, but for most (about 95%) the vaccine will keep you safe and healthy.

More Frequently Asked Questions and Answers:

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html

Philadelphia Department of Public Health
https://www.phila.gov/programs/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/faq

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
https://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/vaccine-education-center/making-vaccines/prevent-covid