NEW YORK STATE | **Office of Children and Family Services**

COVID-19 Vaccine: Safe, Effective, Free
Frequently Asked Questions & Answers: From NYS Department of Health

Right now, more than seven million New Yorkers can get the COVID-19 vaccine—including staff and youth 16 or older at OCFS facilities (https://on.ny.gov/3bfCBp3).

You may have questions about the vaccine's safety and effectiveness. Below, are frequently asked COVID-19 vaccine questions and answers. Go to the NYS Department of Health website for more information, including information on how the vaccines were made, who can get a vaccine, and availability. (https://covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/ or https://covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/frequently-asked-questions).

Is the vaccine safe and effective?
After the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the COVID-19 vaccines, many vaccine safety and monitoring systems watch out for negative side effects. These systems can pick up on negative side effects that clinical trials did not see. If there is an unexpected negative side effect, experts quickly study it to see if it is a safety concern. Experts then decide if changes are needed in vaccine recommendations.

In New York, there is another safety check. Experts on New York' COVID-19 Vaccine Clinical Advisory Task Force review vaccine research before recommending any vaccine to New Yorkers. As of December 18, 2020, the two COVID-19 approved vaccines are the **Pfizer** vaccine and the **Moderna** vaccine.

Will the vaccine give a person COVID?
No. None of the vaccines have materials that cause disease. The approved vaccines use a small, harmless part of the virus's genetic material called 'mRNA'. **This is not COVID-19**. mRNA vaccines teach a person's body to fight COVID-19 if they are exposed to it.

Will the vaccine make a someone sick?
A person may not notice any changes in how they feel after getting a vaccine shot. It's also possible to not feel well in the days after getting a vaccine shot. **This is not COVID-19.** This is the body's immune response to the vaccine and a sign that the vaccine is working. After the COVID-19 vaccine, a person may have: a sore arm where they got the shot, headache, chills, fever, and/or tiredness. A person will usually feel better in a few days.

Can a person get an allergic reaction from the COVID-19 vaccine?
Any allergic reaction will happen occur shortly after a vaccine is administered. This is why the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that people with a history of severe allergic reactions are observed for 30 minutes after vaccination. All other people are observed for 15 minutes after vaccination.

Are COVID vaccines safe for children?
COVID-19 vaccines have not been approved for children younger than 12 years old.

Is it safe to get a COVID-19 vaccine if a person has an underlying medical condition?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccination is important for people with health problems like heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, and obesity. People with these conditions are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19.

If a someone has already had COVID-19 and recovered, do they still need to get vaccinated?

Yes. The CDC recommend that a person get vaccinated even if they have already had COVID-19. This is because a person can get COVID-19 more than once. Although a person may some short-term protection after recovering from COVID-19, it is not clear how long protection lasts.

Is it better to get natural immunity to COVID-19 rather than immunity from a vaccine?

No. While a person may have some short-term protection after recovering from COVID-19, it's not clear how long this protection lasts. Vaccination is the best protection, and it is safe. People who get COVID-19 can have serious illnesses, and some have serious symptoms that last for months.

What is "herd immunity." What would it take to get the population to "herd immunity" from COVID-19?

'Herd immunity' happens when enough people have protection from a disease that it is unlikely that the disease will continue to spread. Experts do not know what percentage of people would need to get vaccinated for there to be herd immunity against COVID-19. Letting COVID-19 spread through communities naturally would and has lead to unnecessary infections, suffering, and death.

If a person gets a COVID-19 vaccine, does a person still need to wear a mask and social distance?

Yes. A person will need to continue to wear a mask, practice social distancing, and good hand hygiene. Experts need more time to understand the protection that COVID-19 vaccines give before deciding to change mask requirements.