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About COVID-19

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) is a disease caused by a virus named SARS-CoV-2.

How is COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 is mainly spread through small droplets that are too small to see but come from the nose and mouth of an infected person when they sneeze, cough, or talk. These droplets scatter and can reach the eyes, nose, or mouth of another person, causing the infection to spread. Another way that COVID-19 can spread is when someone who has the virus sneezes or coughs, and the infected droplets fall onto surfaces around them. If someone touches contaminated surfaces and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth, they could become infected too.

Symptoms of COVID-19 and Long COVID

What are the Symptoms of COVID-19?

Anyone can have mild to severe symptoms 2 to 14 days after being exposed to someone with COVID-19. Symptoms may include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Chills
- Headache,
- Muscle pain
- Congestion / runny nose
- Sore throat
- Fatigue
- Loss of taste or smell
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea these symptoms are less common.
- No symptoms (asymptomatic)

For more information, speak with your health care provider and visit [Symptoms of COVID-19 | COVID-19 | CDC](#).

How serious is COVID-19?

Anyone can get COVID-19, but some people are more likely than others to get very sick.



This includes older people, those who are immunocompromised (weakened immune systems), have certain [disabilities](#), or who have [certain medical conditions](#).

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone 6 months and older get at least one dose of the 2024–2025 COVID-19 vaccines to protect against serious illness from COVID-19.
- Doses and timing of doses are different for people who are 65 years of age and older, those who are [moderately or severely immunocompromised \(weakened immune system\)](#), and young children.
- For questions about your COVID-19 vaccine, like when you are considered to be up to date, talk with your health care provider and visit [Getting Your COVID-19 Vaccine | COVID-19 | CDC](#), and [Staying Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines | COVID-19 | CDC](#).

What is Long COVID?

The CDC defines Long COVID as signs, symptoms, and conditions that continue or develop after COVID-19 infection. These conditions can last weeks, months, or years. **People who get sick with COVID-19, and are NOT vaccinated, may have a higher risk of developing Long COVID or post-COVID conditions compared to people who are vaccinated.** If you are concerned about Long COVID, speak with your health care provider and visit [Long COVID Basics | COVID-19 | CDC](#).

COVID-19 Vaccines

Where can I find the 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccines?

You can get the 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccines in the same places you receive other vaccines like the flu shot. Check with your health care provider, pharmacy, [Local Health Departments](#), or [Federally Qualified Health Center](#) (community health center).

Other options:

- Text your zip code to 438829.
- Call the CDC Info Line at, 1-800-232-0233.
- Visit [COVID-19 \(nj.gov\)](#).
- [Vaccines.gov](#)

What are the CDC recommendations for the 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccine? Which vaccines are available this season?

To protect you and your loved ones from severe illness from COVID-19, hospitalization, and



death, the CDC recommends that everyone aged 6 months and older receive the updated 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccine. It is especially important to get your 2024–2025 COVID-19 vaccine if you are ages 65 and older, are at high risk for severe COVID-19, or have never received a COVID-19 vaccine. The 2023 – 2024 COVID-19 vaccines are no longer authorized in the United States.

- The 2024-2025 Moderna COVID-19 vaccine and the 2024-2025 Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine are available in the U.S for everyone 6 months and older.
- As of August 30, 2024, the FDA authorized and approved the 2024-2025 **Novavax** COVID-19 Vaccine, for those 12 years and older.
- There is no preference for one vaccine over another when more than one vaccine is recommended for an age group.
- Vaccine protection decreases over time, so it is important to talk with your health care provider about staying up to date with your COVID-19 vaccine.

Can people 65 years of age and older get an additional dose of the 2024-2025 COVID-19 Vaccine?

At this time, if you are 65 years of age and older, you are recommended to receive one dose of the 2024 – 2025 COVID-19 vaccine. It is NOT recommended that you receive an additional dose of the 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccine unless you are moderately or severely immunocompromised (weakened immune system). The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) will continue to monitor COVID-19 vaccines and update the vaccine recommendations, as necessary. For more information, talk with your healthcare provider.

Are free COVID-19 vaccines available?

Vaccines are free for most people through the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program, most commercial/private insurance, Medicare, and most Medicaid programs like the Family Care Plan A. Contact your health care provider, [Local Health Department](#), and [Federally Qualified Health Centers](#) to see if you qualify for free or low-cost vaccines.

What is the Vaccines for Children Program and where can I find free COVID-19 vaccines for children?

Eligible children ages 18 years and younger can receive all Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)-approved vaccines, including COVID-19, through the [Vaccines for Children Program \(VFC\)](#) if they meet one of the following requirements:

- Uninsured
- Underinsured
- Medicaid-enrolled in the Family Care plan A
- American Indian/Alaska Native



To find vaccines that are provided through the VFC program, visit:

- [Vaccine Locations \(nj.gov\)](https://www.nj.gov/health/vfc/)
- [Federally Qualified Health Centers \(FQHC\)](#) - underinsured children can only get vaccines at a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC).

Where can I get tested for COVID-19? Are tests free?

- Yes, U.S. households will be eligible to order four free, rapid antigen home tests, which will detect current COVID-19 variants and can be used through the end of the year.
- Private or commercial health insurance may cover the costs of these tests. Also, you can buy self-tests (rapid antigen at-home tests) online or in pharmacies and retail stores. If you have test kits at home, visit the [FDA's website](#) to check if the expiration dates have been extended.
- To find PCR or antigen tests performed at a health care facility and/or low- or no-cost testing for everyone, including people without insurance, visit the following websites: [local health department](#) or a [community-based testing location](#), such as a pharmacy or [health center](#) near you.
- Talk with your health care provider about other testing options that may be available to you.

Vaccine Safety and Effectiveness

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe and effective for everyone? Is it safe for pregnant people, people planning on becoming pregnant, and for those who are breastfeeding?

- To date, hundreds of millions of people have safely received a COVID-19 vaccine under the most intense vaccine safety monitoring in United States history. Getting a COVID-19
- Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is [safer](#) and a more dependable way to build immunity (protection) than getting sick.
- COVID-19 [vaccine ingredients](#) are considered safe for most people. Also, there are specific safety monitoring systems for the [general population](#).
- COVID-19 vaccines are [effective](#) and the benefits of vaccination continue to outweigh any known or potential risks.
- Yes, COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for, [people who are pregnant](#), breastfeeding, or trying to get pregnant now, as well as [people who might become pregnant in the future](#)
- People who get a COVID-19 infection during pregnancy have a higher risk of



complications that can affect their pregnancy and baby, including [preterm](#) (born earlier than 37 weeks of pregnancy) or stillbirths.

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

Some people have [side effects](#) after COVID-19 vaccination, while others may not. Side effects such as soreness at the injection site and fever are common and tend to be mild; they should go away within a few days. Severe allergic reactions are rare.

Can COVID-19 vaccines interact with human DNA?

COVID-19 vaccines [do not change or interact with your DNA](#) in any way.

Vaccine Record Keeping

How can I keep an accurate vaccine record for myself or my loved ones?

Keeping track of the vaccines you and your family members have received is an important part of staying up to date with vaccines. For details on how to keep an accurate vaccine record for yourself and your loved ones, visit [NJHHS](#). You can also download the Docket® app from the [App store](#) or [Google Play](#) in English or Spanish depending on your smartphone settings.

Monitoring (Surveillance) and Data About COVID-19

Where can I find available data about COVID-19 and how it is being monitored?

- For information on New Jersey's data, visit the [Department of Health | Communicable Disease Service | New Jersey COVID-19 Dashboard \(nj.gov\)](#).
- For CDC's data, visit [CDC COVID Data Tracker: Home](#).