



# How Safe Are the COVID-19 Vaccines?

Safety is a top priority when any new vaccine is developed. The COVID-19 vaccines are no different. Here are some common questions people have about the safety of these new vaccines.

**Q** Is it safe to receive a COVID-19 vaccine if I am getting other medical treatments?

**A** **YES, absolutely.** Most experts agree that it is safe to get the COVID-19 vaccine if you are receiving some other kind of medical treatment (for example, cancer treatment). In fact, it may be more important for you to get vaccinated than someone who does not have a pre-existing condition, since some of them put you at greater risk of severe COVID symptoms. If you have concerns, discuss them with your doctor.

**Q** What is messenger RNA, which is used in the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines?

**A** Messenger RNA—or “mRNA” for short—is a tiny piece of genetic material that is like an instruction manual for the cells in our bodies. It teaches our cells how to make a protein that is also found in coronavirus, and then your body learns to fight it. Once your body initiates the immune response, the mRNA is broken down and eliminated.

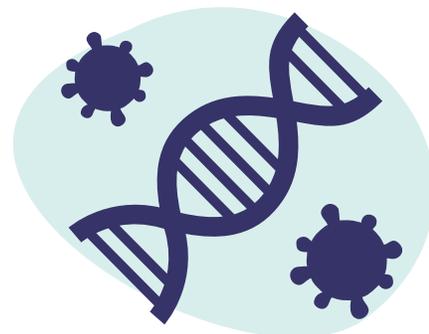
Researchers have studied mRNA for many years, but this is the first time it is being used in a vaccine that has received authorization from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). This is a huge scientific breakthrough that may help us create other new vaccines in the future.

**Q** Is it true that the vaccine affects my DNA?

**A** **NO.** The COVID-19 vaccines do not change or interact with your DNA in any way. The vaccines work by teaching your body how to fight the coronavirus. This in no way affects your DNA.

**Q** Do the benefits of getting the COVID-19 vaccine outweigh the risks?

**A** **YES,** the benefits far outweigh the risks. The COVID-19 vaccines are very effective at preventing coronavirus infection. That means almost everyone who gets the vaccines will not get COVID-19. Better yet, the vaccines have only minor side effects such as arm soreness, muscle aches, headache, fatigue, and a low fever. All this means that it is much riskier to not get the vaccine than to get it.



Q

Can I get the vaccine if I have already had COVID?

A

**YES.** In fact, it is recommended that everyone get vaccinated, even if they have already had COVID-19. This is because there are still many unanswered questions about COVID-19, including how long someone is protected from getting sick again after recovering from it.

Q

What about people with compromised immune systems or people with autoimmune diseases? Should they get the vaccine?

A

**YES.** The risk the vaccines pose for these people is no different than the risk to others. In fact, sometimes people with weaker immune systems have fewer side effects from vaccines. If you have concerns, discuss them with your doctor.



Q

Should I get vaccinated if I have allergies?

A

The answer in most cases is **YES**. If you have allergies to certain medications, foods, or environmental factors, it is safe for you to be vaccinated. If you have a history of severe reaction to a vaccine or to another injectable drug, you should also be fine to get the COVID vaccine, but you should check with your doctor first. At most vaccine sites, people are asked to stay for at least 15 minutes after receiving the vaccination to make sure there are no allergic reactions.



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