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Building COVID-19 Vaccination Confidence (FAQs)

With many factors influencing vaccine decision-making, including history, culture, social, and political factors, the Howard County Health Department and NAACP want to address common questions and/or concerns you may have toward the COVID-19 vaccine with simple evidence-based information to help you make a confident decision.

Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe?
The vaccines are safe and effective. Our national vaccine safety system makes sure that all vaccines are as safe as possible before they are authorized for use. To ensure full vaccine effectiveness, it is important to receive both doses of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines. The vaccines are not considered fully effective for two weeks following the final dose.

Will the COVID-19 vaccine give me COVID-19?
No. The COVID-19 vaccine will not give you COVID-19. None of the COVID-19 vaccines currently approved in the U.S. contain the live virus that causes COVID-19. They prevent COVID-19 infection, or reduce your risk of severe illness from the disease if you are infected.

Can the COVID-19 vaccine alter my DNA?
No. The 2 authorized mRNA COVID-19 vaccines (Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna) never enter the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA is stored. The mRNA cannot affect or interact with your DNA in any way. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is viral vector vaccine, which does not interact with your DNA in any way.

Does the COVID-19 vaccine contain any government tracking materials (i.e. microchips)?
No. None of the authorized COVID-19 vaccines contain microchips. Our national vaccine supply is monitored to ensure the safety and efficacy of vaccines, the location of vaccines (for clinics), and their expiration dates. Personal data collected at a vaccination site is only used to verify your identity, where you live and that you are eligible for the vaccine.

What are the common side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine?
In some cases, side effects after vaccination may not be experienced, but when experienced, most common side effects include: Injection site pain and/or redness, Headache, Fatigue/exhaustion, Muscle and/or joint pain .

Vaccines protect individuals and communities.
Vaccination not only protects you.
It protects those who can't be vaccinated

#VaccinesWork for All — World Health Organization

Will I be banned from travel or accessing public spaces until I get the vaccine?
No. The COVID-19 vaccine remains voluntary, although we encourage all eligible individuals to consider getting the vaccine, the decision is yours and access to public spaces will not be limited.

Which vaccine type should I receive?
Each of the vaccines authorized for use by the FDA have been proven to be safe and effective at preventing serious illness, hospitalization and death from COVID-19. If you are offered the opportunity to receive any vaccination, you should take it, regardless of vaccine type.

What are the benefits of getting the COVID-19 vaccine?
The COVID-19 vaccines protect us and our loved ones, including loved those who may be at increased risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19. The more people vaccinated, the closer we come to ending the pandemic.

What are the long-term effects of the vaccine?
Because the COVID-19 vaccines are so new, we can't know for sure. Studies are ongoing to monitor any long-term effects, including how long the vaccine remains effective.

Does the vaccine work on the new strains?
So far, studies suggest that the protection generated through vaccination with currently authorized vaccines recognize these variants. This is being closely studied.

How were they able to make the vaccine so quickly?
The blueprint for mRNA vaccines has been in development for decades so when COVID-19 was discovered, scientists only had to analyze the virus to begin developing the vaccine. The development of the COVID vaccines also involved unprecedented worldwide collaboration to help speed up the timeline while also following all health and safety processes.

Will I be able to get the COVID-19 vaccine if I am undocumented resident or an immigrant still applying for a green card?
Yes. Immigration documentation is not required at vaccination clinics. Additionally, there are immigration resources available to assist you with navigation of health and other resources.

How is the safety of the vaccines being monitored?
CDC has developed a tool called v-safe to help us quickly find any safety issues with COVID-19 vaccines. V-safe is a voluntarily, smartphone-based after-vaccination health checker for people who receive COVID-19 vaccines. Adverse events described on this page have been reported to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). CDC, FDA, and other federal partners will continue to monitor the safety of the COVID-19 vaccines.

Is it safe for me to get the COVID-19 vaccine if I have allergies?
Yes, the CDC still recommends individuals with allergies (food, environmental, latex) to consider getting vaccinated. Those with a history of anaphylactic shock to prior vaccinations may speak with their healthcare provider first. All people who receive vaccine are monitored for 15 minutes (and up to 30 minutes for those with history of anaphylactic shock).

Is it safe for me to get the COVID-19 vaccine if I am pregnant, or am planning to become pregnant?
Yes. If you are pregnant, you can receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy can protect you from severe illness from COVID-19. Based on how these vaccines work in the body, experts believe they are unlikely to pose a risk for people who are pregnant. However, there is currently limited data on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in pregnant people. Please consult a doctor if you have questions about getting vaccinated.

Why should I get vaccinated if I still have to follow the same COVID-19 safety guidance?
We are still learning more about COVID-19 and how it spreads - until we learn more, and more people are able to access the vaccine, it's best to continue to practice the same COVID-19 safety measures we have been observing to continue to reduce the possible spread of the virus.

How have some people who have gotten the COVID-19 vaccine still tested positive for COVID-19?
It typically takes two weeks after vaccination for the body to build protection (immunity) against the virus that causes COVID-19. Therefore, a vaccinated person could still get COVID-19 if not enough time (i.e. 2 weeks after final dose) has passed to provide full protection.

There are rare cases in which fully vaccinated people test positive for COVID-19, but vaccinated people are protected from severe illness from the virus.

For health questions about COVID-19, call the Health Department COVID-19 information line at 410-313-6284.