

COVID-19 Vaccines: Answers From Ob-Gyns



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Key Points

- COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. The vaccines help protect you from serious illness.
- COVID-19 vaccines are recommended for everyone age 6 months and older, including those who are pregnant, postpartum, breastfeeding, or planning a pregnancy.
- Stay up to date on your COVID-19 vaccines. Get vaccines when they are recommended.

Related Resources

- [COVID-19, Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Breastfeeding: Answers From Ob-Gyns](#)
- [COVID-19, Gynecologist Visits, and Telehealth: Answers From Ob-Gyns](#)

Overview

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an illness that affects the lungs and breathing. It is caused by a [coronavirus](#). Symptoms may include fever, cough, sore throat, and congestion. [Other symptoms](#) are possible too. Symptoms may appear 2 to 14 days after you are exposed to the virus.

You may have no symptoms, mild symptoms, or severe symptoms. Symptoms may vary with new COVID-19 [variants](#) and may also vary based on your vaccination status.

Should I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, medical experts strongly encourage vaccination for everyone 6 months and older. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) [recommends](#) vaccination if you are pregnant, postpartum, breastfeeding, or planning a pregnancy. Find out how to get a COVID-19 vaccine near you through [the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) website](#).

For information about vaccines for children 11 and under, visit the American Academy of Pediatrics website [healthychildren.org](#).

Are COVID-19 vaccines safe and effective?

Yes, studies have shown that COVID-19 vaccines are safe and highly effective. The COVID-19 vaccines can prevent infection, severe illness, and death from COVID-19, including from [new variants](#).

Before vaccines are given to the public, vaccines go through [many testing and review steps](#). The COVID-19 vaccines meet strict safety standards required by the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#). More than 270 million people in the United States have received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose.

Getting a Vaccine

What vaccines are available in the United States?

There are three COVID-19 vaccines in the United States: Pfizer, Moderna, and Novavax. Updated versions of the vaccines protect against the latest coronavirus variant. Learn more from the CDC about [the different vaccines](#).

Should I get an updated vaccine?

Yes, an updated vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months and older, including anyone who is pregnant, postpartum, or breastfeeding. Learn more from the CDC about [current vaccine recommendations](#).

Do COVID-19 vaccines have side effects?

It's common to feel side effects after getting a COVID-19 vaccine. There are different types of COVID-19 vaccines that have varying side effects. Side effects also vary from person to person. Some vaccines may make you feel like you have the flu for a few days. This is normal. It's also normal to have short-term arm pain in the area where you got the shot.

If you have a fever or other side effects after getting the vaccine, you can take over-the-counter (OTC) pain relief medication. If you are pregnant, the OTC medication acetaminophen is safe to take during pregnancy.

If you are worried about your side effects or they last more than a few days, talk with your health care professional.

Do I need a vaccine if I already had COVID-19?

Yes, you still need a vaccine even if you have had COVID-19 in the past. There is no way to tell how protected you are from COVID-19 after infection. Your level of protection may vary based on how severe your illness was, how long it has been since you were sick, and how old you are.

Research shows that the COVID-19 vaccine gives more protection against future illness than the protection you might have after getting the virus. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine may help prevent you from getting COVID-19 again.

Vaccination may also strengthen your protection against severe illness and [long COVID](#). Long COVID can cause chronic pain, brain fog, shortness of breath, chronic fatigue, and other symptoms that last for weeks, month, or even years.

Pregnancy, Breastfeeding, and Fertility

Should I get a COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy?

Yes, you should get a COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy. ACOG strongly recommends that all pregnant women stay up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines. Getting a vaccine could help both you and your [fetus](#).

Remember that during pregnancy, you have a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 than people who aren't pregnant. The vaccines are very effective at preventing infection, severe illness, and death from COVID-19.

When you get vaccinated, the [antibodies](#) made by your body may be passed to your fetus. These antibodies may help protect your baby from the virus after birth. How much protection your antibodies may provide is not yet known.

Are COVID-19 vaccines safe during pregnancy?

Yes, research confirms that COVID-19 vaccines are safe during pregnancy. Scientists have compared the pregnancies of women who have received COVID-19 vaccines and women who have not. The reports show that these women have had similar pregnancy outcomes. Data do not show any safety concerns.

If you are pregnant and want to know more about the vaccines, you can talk with your [obstetrician–gynecologist \(ob-gyn\)](#). This conversation is not required to get a vaccine, though it may be helpful.

Learn more from the CDC about [COVID-19 vaccines, pregnancy, and breastfeeding](#).

Should I get a COVID-19 vaccine if I am breastfeeding?

Yes, ACOG strongly recommends that breastfeeding women stay up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines. Breastfeeding after vaccination is safe for the baby. There is no need to stop breastfeeding if you want to get a vaccine. When you get vaccinated, the

antibodies made by your body may be passed through breast milk and may help protect your child from the virus.

Should I get a COVID-19 vaccine if I am trying to get pregnant?

Yes, if you are planning or trying to get pregnant, you should stay up to date on your COVID-19 vaccines. There is no evidence that the COVID-19 vaccines cause infertility, and a growing amount of data confirms this. You also do not need to delay getting pregnant after you get a vaccine.

Learn more from the CDC about [COVID-19 vaccines for people who would like to have a baby](#).

Other Questions

Can COVID-19 vaccines affect menstrual periods?

A study of nearly 4,000 people found there was a very small, temporary change in [menstrual cycle](#) length after vaccination. Periods were late by less than 1 day on average and returned to normal within 1 or 2 months. Another study of nearly 10,000 people found a small increase in the chances of heavier bleeding after the first vaccine dose. This returned to normal with the next menstrual period.

Menstrual cycles often change a small amount from month to month. Temporary changes can be caused by many factors, including stress, lifestyle changes, and some underlying health conditions. Small changes in cycle length and the amount of bleeding are normal and do not affect health or fertility.

More research is needed on this topic and in more diverse groups of people, but the results of this study are reassuring. This is good evidence that any effect of the COVID-19 vaccines on periods is temporary, small, and no cause for concern.

Can I get a COVID-19 vaccine while I'm on my period?

Yes, you can get a COVID-19 vaccine while you have your [menstrual period](#). There is no need to reschedule.

Can COVID-19 vaccines affect breast cancer screening (mammography)?

There have been reports of COVID-19 vaccines causing swollen lymph nodes in underarms. This is a temporary side effect, but the swelling can make mammograms hard to read correctly. Because of this side effect, routine mammograms may be postponed for 4 to 6 weeks after you get a COVID-19 vaccine.

If you have any problems with your breasts or if you are at high risk for breast cancer, you should not delay your mammogram. If you do have a mammogram fewer than 4 to 6 weeks after getting a COVID-19 vaccine, tell the health care staff when you got your vaccine, which type of vaccine you had, and which arm the shot went in.

Remember, breast cancer screening is important health care that you should not skip. Read [Mammography and Other Screening Tests for Breast Problems](#) to learn more.

What should I know about COVID-19 vaccines and myocarditis?

There have been rare reports of temporary inflammation in or around the heart muscle after vaccination with the Pfizer, Moderna, and Novavax vaccines. These conditions are called [myocarditis and pericarditis](#). These cases have been seen mostly in male teens and young adults. Most patients do well with treatment and quickly feel better.

The risk of illness and death from COVID-19 is far greater than the rare risks of myocarditis and pericarditis. The CDC continues to recommend everyone 6 months and older get a COVID-19 vaccine.

I have heard rumors about how the vaccines can affect my body. What is the truth?

COVID-19 vaccines [work in different ways](#), and all of them are proven to be safe. It is important to know that:

- The vaccines cannot give you COVID-19. None of the vaccines uses the live virus that causes COVID-19.
- The vaccines do not affect your genes or DNA.
- There is no evidence that the COVID-19 vaccines cause infertility. ACOG recommends vaccination for anyone who may consider getting pregnant in the future.

Visit the [CDC website](#) for the latest information on COVID-19 vaccines.

Resources and Glossary

Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines

Learn about the vaccines that can protect you from COVID-19:

- [COVID-19 Vaccines While Pregnant or Breastfeeding](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccines for People Who Would Like to Have a Baby](#)
- [Vaccine Safety and Monitoring](#)
- [How CDC Monitors Vaccine Effectiveness](#)

Vaccines.gov

www.vaccines.gov

Find a COVID-19 vaccine near you.

MotherToBaby: Ask an Expert

<https://mothertobaby.org/ask-an-expert>

Evidence-based information on the safety of medications and vaccines during pregnancy and while breastfeeding. U.S. and Canada residents can submit questions via email or phone call.

Glossary

Antibodies: Proteins in the blood that the body makes in reaction to foreign substances, such as bacteria and viruses.

Fetus: The stage of human development beyond 8 completed weeks after fertilization.

Infertility: The inability to get pregnant after 1 year of having regular sexual intercourse without the use of birth control.

Menstrual Cycle: The monthly process of changes that occur to prepare a woman's body for possible pregnancy. A menstrual cycle is defined as the first day of menstrual

bleeding of one cycle to the first day of menstrual bleeding of the next cycle.

Menstrual Period: The monthly shedding of blood and tissue from the uterus.

Obstetrician–Gynecologist (Ob-Gyn): A doctor with special training and education in women’s health.

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If you have further questions, contact your ob-gyn.

Don't have an ob-gyn? [Learn how to find a doctor near you.](#)

FAQ529

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