

COVID-19 Vaccine FAQs for Teens

It's okay to feel anxious about the COVID-19 vaccines. You have questions and we have answers to help ease some of those concerns.

Q1: I've heard COVID-19 doesn't affect teens. Why do I need to get the vaccine?

A: While fewer teenagers have been sick with COVID-19 compared to adults, they can be infected with the virus and spread it to others. You may not even know you have it, but you can spread it to your friends, your teachers or your family. By getting the shot, you're helping protect yourself and those around you. The vaccine helps ensure you're able to get back to a normal life and have those high school experiences.

Q2: If I'm young and healthy and get COVID-19 will I even get sick? I've heard only older people need to worry about it.

A. While you may not get seriously sick from the disease, there still isn't enough research to show what the long-lasting effects of COVID-19 may be, especially in younger teens and children who have contracted it. Studies on long-term effects are ongoing and current research has shown long-term effects to include reduced breathing ability, lung scarring or brain-fog many months after recovering from the virus.

Q3. Does the vaccine even work?

A. Yes, all of the current vaccines authorized for use in the U.S. have undergone the necessary and required trials to ensure their safety and effectiveness. The results from all of the three have shown to prevent severe illness from COVID-19.

Q4: How do I know the vaccine is effective in teens?

A: The Pfizer vaccine trials included individuals who were 12 or older, and the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines showed to be 95 percent effective. The vaccines are currently undergoing trials for younger age groups.

Q5: Where can I get the vaccine?

A: There are many providers in our area. The Sedgwick County Health Department provides walk-in services at our Community Vaccine Clinic at 223 S. Main. You can also find a list of our vaccine mobile clinics by clicking, [here](#). You can also use the [Find My Vaccine](#) tool to locate other vaccine providers near you.

Q6: Will I need my parent's permission to get the vaccine?

A. People who are 18 years and older do not need parent's permission. If you are younger than 18, in most cases, you will need parental permission. The exception is if you are 16 or 17 years old and emancipated or legally separated from your parents, you will not need a parent's permission.

Q7: Can I get the vaccine if I'm not a citizen?

A. Yes. The goal is to ensure our entire community is vaccinated. Regardless of your immigration status you are eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine and will not be turned away.

Q8: How much does a COVID-19 vaccination cost?

A: There's no charge! The COVID-19 vaccine is being provided at no cost to all individuals by the federal government.

Q9: Will I need health insurance to get the vaccine?

A. No, you are eligible to receive the vaccine at no cost. Some Vaccine Providers may ask if you have insurance so they can recover the administration fee cost from the insurer. There are no out of pocket costs to the person receiving the vaccine.

Q10: How many doses are needed and why?

A: Both Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require two doses. The first shot primes the immune system,



helping it recognize the virus. The second shot strengthens the immune response. You are not fully vaccinated until you receive both doses. Johnson & Johnson vaccine requires just one dose.

Five months after you are fully vaccinated with Pfizer or Moderna, or two months after Johnson & Johnson, you should get a booster to stay up-to-date. Only the Pfizer booster is currently authorized for ages 12-17, but the CDC says it is safe and effective to mix-and-match vaccines. Boosters provide added protection against new variants like Omicron.

Q11: What are the side effects of the vaccine?

A: The side effects are very similar to other common vaccines you may get like your yearly flu shot. You may experience redness, swelling and pain at the injection site; you may feel tired or nauseous; you may have a fever, headache or joint and muscle pain. Some people do not feel anything at all.

Q12: If I get vaccinated, do I still need to wear a mask and socially distance?

A: The CDC recommends people who are fully vaccinated wear a mask indoors in public areas of high transmission. Masks will still be required in healthcare settings, at businesses that mandate them, and on public transportation.

Q13: If I get vaccinated, can I still get COVID-19 and infect others?

A: Possibly. The vaccines are new and studies so far show up to 94-95 percent effectiveness. There is a chance that some vaccinated people may still get infected and spread the virus. In addition to vaccination, wearing a mask and practicing social distancing are still some of the best way to reduce your risk of catching or spreading COVID-19.

Q14: Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccine?

A: No. None of the COVID-19 vaccines currently authorized for use in the United States use the live virus that causes COVID-19 so it is not possible for the vaccine to infect you with the virus.

Q15: If I have previously had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated?

A: Yes. CDC recommends that you get vaccinated even if you have already had COVID-19 because you can get infected again. While you may have

some short-term antibody protection after recovering from COVID-19, experts don't know how long this protection will last. By getting vaccinated, you're helping ensure that you stay protected longer and you're helping protect those around you.

Q16: Is it better to just get sick from COVID-19 and get better instead of getting my immunity from the vaccine?

A: We don't know how long protection lasts for those who get infected or those who are vaccinated. However, we do know that COVID-19 can cause very serious illness for many people. If you get COVID-19, you also risk giving it to loved ones who may get very sick. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is the safer choice.

Q17: I heard that some COVID-19 vaccines alter your DNA. Is this true?

A: No. Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines use a new and well-researched technology called mRNA. mRNA stands for messenger ribonucleic acid. The mRNA in the vaccines teach the body's cells how to make a protein that triggers an immune response. mRNA never enters the nucleus of a cell, which is where our DNA is kept. Johnson & Johnson's (J&J) vaccine utilizes a well-known technology known as Viral Vector. The genetic material delivered by the viral vector vaccine does not integrate into a person's DNA.

Q18: Can my employer require me to get the vaccine?

A: Yes. Your employer can require that you receive a COVID-19 vaccine in order to remain an employee.

Q19: Do I have to get the vaccine to go to school?

A: No. There is no federal or state mandate that requires students to get the vaccine in order to attend school in person.

Q20: Which vaccine should I get?

A: CDC has stated a [preference](#) for Pfizer or Moderna vaccinations and boosters over J&J.

Pfizer is available to anyone over five years and over. Moderna and J&J vaccines are available to anyone 18 and over.

