



COVID Vaccine Talking Points

The evidence-based talking points below are provided by HHS to help increase vaccine confidence while reinforcing basic prevention measures.

KEY FACTS ON COVID-19

- **COVID-19 is dangerous.** The virus can cause severe disease, hospitalization, or death. Vaccines and boosters offer the best protection from the worst outcomes from COVID.
- **Unvaccinated adults are nearly 5 times** more likely to be hospitalized with COVID as those who have been vaccinated and boosted.
- **Vaccination reduces the risk of long COVID**, which leaves people with fatigue, pain, and memory problems that can last for months. The best way to prevent long COVID is by not getting COVID in the first place.
- **Vaccination lowers the risk of variants emerging.** The more unvaccinated people there are, the greater the chance COVID has to spread and mutate into more contagious variants that cause severe disease.
- **Vaccines are widely available and free.** Vaccines are available at no cost to everyone age 6 months or older living in the United States, no matter their immigration or health insurance status.
- **Getting vaccinated** is a decision to discuss with a doctor, pharmacist, or other health care provider you trust.
- **The American Medical Association** reports that 96% of doctors have gotten a shot themselves.

GENERAL VACCINATION

Preventive measures still matter.

- Three-quarters of American adults and two-thirds of all Americans have been vaccinated. That's more than 223 million Americans who are protected from serious illness, hospitalization, and death.
- It is possible for vaccinated people to get COVID-19; but people who are vaccinated and boosted have strong protection against severe illness and death.
 - Masks can add another layer of protection for everyone. People in communities where COVID is spreading should wear a mask in indoor public spaces.
 - If you are at high risk for getting seriously sick from COVID or live with someone who is at high risk, you may choose to wear a mask in more situations.
 - If you wear a mask, choose one that is comfortable and fits well.
- The Omicron variant and its subvariants spread more easily than other COVID variants. Currently, BA.5, a highly transmissible Omicron subvariant, accounts for nearly 9 out of 10 COVID cases in the U.S.

- Vaccines and boosters are still effective at preventing the worst outcomes from COVID, even from Omicron and its variants.
- If you are not vaccinated, no matter your age, you are at risk of getting sick, and even dying.

COVID-19 vaccines are available to anyone age 6 months or older.

- Every person in the country age 6 months or older—in every community, in every corner of America—is eligible to get vaccinated.
- Vaccines are free and available, regardless of health insurance or immigration status. And getting a shot has never been easier or more convenient.
- Vaccines help prevent severe illness and death from COVID.
- The risks from COVID far outweigh any risks from side effects of the vaccine.
- Go to [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) or [text your ZIP code to 438829](https://www.fda.gov/oc/2021/08/04/text-your-zip-code-to-438829) to find places nearby to get a vaccine.

Vaccines and booster shots offer protection against COVID-19 variants.

- We have powerful tools for protection from variants: Vaccines.
 - People who are unvaccinated are nearly 2 times more likely to get COVID than people who are vaccinated and boosted.
 - Vaccines and boosters are the best protection against severe COVID illness and death. Masks can add an extra layer of protection.
 - Unvaccinated people are at a higher risk from currently circulating variants. They have a higher chance of getting severely ill and even dying.
- COVID vaccines and boosters protect people from the worst outcomes of COVID and also help reduce the spread of COVID in communities, further reducing risks for our most vulnerable populations.
- We know the path to controlling the virus and limiting variants: get vaccinated, get boosted, and take your children to get vaccinated and boosted when eligible.

Three vaccines are available for the primary series for anyone age 12 or older.

- The Novavax vaccine is the newest vaccine for fighting COVID. It is based on familiar vaccine technology.
 - The new vaccine is known as a protein vaccine, which packages harmless proteins of the COVID-19 virus with another ingredient that stimulates the immune system.
 - Protein vaccines have been used for more than 30 years in the United States, beginning with the first licensed hepatitis B vaccine.
- CDC believes Novavax may be a good option for unvaccinated people 12 and older who are concerned about the mRNA technology used in the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, which have been thoroughly tested and safely used for 18 months.
- Only the Pfizer and Moderna shots are available for use as boosters.

Getting COVID-19 can have serious long-lasting health effects, while long-term impacts from vaccines are unlikely.

- COVID and long COVID are very unpredictable.
- Anyone, no matter their age or health status, who gets COVID-19 can have symptoms for months after they recover, even if they had a very mild case.
- Some studies show that 1 out of every 5 adult COVID survivors reports lingering symptoms – often called long COVID.
 - Common symptoms of long COVID include fatigue, pain, shortness of breath, difficulty thinking or concentrating, fast or irregular heartbeat, loss of taste and smell, memory problems, mood changes, and hair loss.
 - COVID can damage organs, including the lungs, heart, and brain, and can lead to an increased risk of long-term health problems such as strokes or seizures.
 - Studies have found that, regardless of other risk factors, people who have had COVID are at higher risk for heart disease, including people who were not hospitalized for COVID.
- Vaccination reduces the risk of getting long COVID by preventing COVID in the first place. Getting vaccinated is a safer way to build protection than getting sick with COVID.
- Millions of people have received COVID vaccines without experiencing serious, long-term health effects from the vaccines.
- The risks from COVID far outweigh any risks from side effects of the vaccine.

We Can Do This.

- Want more information about the benefits of getting vaccinated?
 - **Talk to a doctor.** A health care provider is a great person to answer any questions you may have about the COVID-19 vaccines.
 - **Get answers** by visiting [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus) for more information.
 - **Help the people you care about** find vaccines at [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov).

VACCINATION FOR CHILDREN

Vaccines are now available for children ages 6 months and older.

- You can't predict how COVID will affect kids if they get it. They might be one of the lucky ones and just have the sniffles, but the risk for something much worse is very real.
- More than 14 million children under age 18 in the U.S. have gotten COVID.
- This year, kids under 5 have been more likely than older kids to be hospitalized with COVID. Even children who don't need hospital care sometimes have symptoms that can last for months.
- Fortunately, children ages 6 months through 4 years can now get the protection of a COVID vaccine.

- The best way to protect your child is with a safe and effective COVID vaccine that has been tested in children their age. COVID vaccines for children are now available at no cost.
- Parents and caregivers can get their children 6 months through 5 years of age vaccinated with the Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines to better protect them from COVID-19.

Vaccines for children have undergone the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history.

- Clinical trials for vaccines for children ages 6 months to 11 years were designed to look at safety and to find the best dose. The vaccines protect children without causing serious safety concerns.
- Vaccines for children ages 6 months to 5 years, and vaccines and boosters for children 5 to 11, are given in lower/smaller doses tailored just for them.
- CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that children, including children who have already had COVID, get a COVID vaccine.

BOOSTERS

Everyone 5 or older who is vaccinated should get boosted when eligible.

- COVID boosters give continued protection that allows people to gather, travel, go to concerts, watch sporting events, and celebrate with others without having to worry about getting seriously ill.
- Being up to date on COVID-19 vaccines helps prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death.
- Boosters can provide continued protection and provide the best defense possible against COVID, including from variants that might be more contagious or cause more severe disease.
- Age is the strongest risk factor for COVID complications. Anyone who is vaccinated and age 50 or older or immunocompromised should get a booster right away if they haven't already had one this year.
- Everyone age 5 or older who is vaccinated should get boosted when eligible.
 - CDC recommends that everyone ages 5 and older who is vaccinated get a COVID booster 5 months after their Pfizer or Moderna vaccination, or 2 months after a Johnson & Johnson vaccination.
 - Vaccinated adults who are 50 years old and older should get a second booster shot four months after their last shot.
 - Vaccinated adults 18 and older may choose either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine as a booster, regardless of whether previously they had Pfizer, Moderna, or Johnson & Johnson.
 - The Pfizer vaccine is available as a booster for children 17 and younger who are eligible.
 - Adults who received the Johnson & Johnson single-dose vaccine or vaccine and booster should get a booster or second booster shot.

- Like the initial doses of COVID-19 vaccines, boosters are free to everyone living in the U.S. They are readily available both by appointment and walk-in visits, and no insurance or identification is required to receive a booster shot.