Trusted Answers to Your COVID-19 Vaccine Questions

May 25, 2021

Four COVID-19 vaccines have been approved for use in Canada and millions of people have received these vaccines all over the world. This bulletin addresses common concerns and questions about the vaccines so you can have useful information about what is getting into your body when you get a COVID-19 vaccine. **The information in this bulletin has been verified by doctors and researchers.**

Can I get the vaccine if I have allergies?

Yes, it's safe for you to receive the COVID-19 vaccine even if you have a history of allergic reactions to different foods, medications, or other substances. If you have a history of severe allergic reactions, wait at the vaccination centre for 30 minutes after vaccination to ensure you're feeling OK. Medical staff are always available on-site to support you in the rare circumstance that you have a reaction. If you have had a severe allergy to one of the specific COVID-19 vaccine ingredients (like polyethylene glycol [PEG] or polysorbate) or to a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, talk to your health care provider about how to receive the vaccine safely. Please note that these specific allergies are VERY rare.

Can I get the vaccine if I have a medical condition?

You can safely receive the vaccine if you have medical conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, asthma, or anemia. The vaccines were tested and found to be safe and effective among people with a wide variety of medical conditions.

If you have a **specific** health condition or take a medication that **weakens your immune system** (immunosuppressive disease or immunosuppressant medication, like chemotherapy or high doses of steroid pills, etc.) or an autoimmune disease, you should speak to your health care provider to decide when it's best to receive the vaccine.

Should I wait until most people have received the vaccine?

No. Get the vaccine as soon as it is your turn. It helps to protect you from getting sick or dying from COVID-19. As of May 25, over 1 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been given to people across the world. To end the pandemic, most people need to receive the vaccine; the sooner everyone gets vaccinated, the safer our communities will be.

For how long does the vaccine protect me?

Researchers are still trying to determine exactly how long the vaccines offer protection. You may be required to receive booster shots in the future for continued protection against the COVID-19 virus.

The COVID-19 vaccines are administered in either one or two doses, depending on the vaccine. If the vaccine you receive is administered in two doses, you will be asked to return for a second dose at a later date. You must take the first and second doses of the vaccine so that you can have greater protection from severe COVID-19 illness or death.

Remember: You should continue to follow all COVID-19 safety measures, such as wearing a mask, keeping your distance from others, and washing your hands, even after you have been vaccinated.

Vaccines protect you and the people you love from getting sick from COVID-19. The more people receive the vaccine, the more protected everyone is!

We hope you find this bulletin useful! We invite you to share it widely, use it as the script to record an audio or video file, or translate it into more languages to share with others. Please be sure to credit the source: Women's College Hospital, OCASI, TAIBU Community Health Centre and Refugee 613.

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