

ANDREW M. CUOMO  
Governor

ANN MARIE T. SULLIVAN, M.D.  
Commissioner

CHRISTOPHER TAVELLA, Ph.D.  
Executive Deputy Commissioner

## Why should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

The COVID-19 vaccine is an important, safe and effective tool in the fight against the COVID-19 virus. Remember – COVID-19 is very serious, and can cause severe medical complications that lead to death in some people.

The best way to protect yourself from COVID-19 is by getting the vaccine as soon as possible and taking other precautions, including practicing social distancing, continuing to wear a mask and washing your hands often and thoroughly.

## How does the vaccine work?

The COVID-19 vaccine is delivered in two doses over the course of three to four weeks. The vaccine helps protect you by strengthening your immune system and helping it to recognize and fight the virus.

## Can a COVID-19 vaccine give you COVID-19?

No. The COVID-19 vaccines being used in the U.S. don't use the live virus that causes COVID-19.

## What are the possible side effects of a COVID-19 vaccine?

Some people may have very mild side effects for a day or two after the vaccine. **This does NOT mean you are sick** - it's a sign that your immune system is being activated to fight the virus.

Side effects can include:

- Pain, redness or swelling where the shot was given
- Fever
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Chills
- Joint pain

## Can I get a COVID-19 vaccine if I have a history of severe allergic reactions?

If you have common allergies (e.g., cats/dogs, hay fever, dust or pollen), you should have no difficulties taking the vaccine. If you've had a severe allergic reaction to other vaccines or injectable medications, ask your doctor if you should get a COVID-19 vaccine.

## Can I stop taking safety precautions after getting a COVID-19 vaccine?

While the vaccine is extremely effective in protecting the person who receives it, it may be possible for people who are exposed to COVID-19 to spread it to others, even if they themselves have been vaccinated and are immune.

Until we learn more, and to protect others and prevent the spread of COVID-19, you should continue to follow these precautions for avoiding the COVID-19 virus even after getting your vaccine:

- Avoid close contact with others and maintain social distancing.
- Continue to wear a mask.
- Practice good hand hygiene. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Stay home if you're sick.