m n DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Facts About COVID-19 Vaccination

IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Safe and effective vaccines are available for people who are incarcerated. Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 is one of the most important steps someone can take to protect themselves.

It is normal to have concerns and questions about a new vaccine, especially for those that face barriers to accessing health care or who are hesitant to trust the health care system due to medical trauma, abuse, or equity concerns – both historical and present. Here are the facts on COVID-19 vaccines.

COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective

COVID-19 vaccines are made like other vaccines and no safety steps were skipped in the process. All COVID-19 vaccines were studied with tens of thousands of volunteers of different ages, races, ethnicities, and medical histories to make sure they are safe and work. More than 580 million COVID-19 vaccine doses have been given safely to people in the United States, and all vaccines continue to be monitored to see how they are working and for side effects.

Vaccine researchers collected the necessary data to show the vaccines work and are safe for people from many different communities and backgrounds. In addition, COVID-19 vaccines are recommended for people who are pregnant or breastfeeding, or who recently had a baby. Evidence continues to build showing it is safe to get vaccinated while pregnant or breastfeeding. There is no evidence that any of the COVID-19 vaccines affect future fertility, so people who want to have a baby someday should get vaccinated as well.

Three vaccines are available in the United States: Pfizer, Moderna, and Novavax. The COVID-19 vaccines offered in correctional facilities are the same vaccines given in the community. You can ask what vaccine your facility is using.

COVID-19 vaccines protect against COVID-19 disease

Like other vaccines, COVID-19 vaccines help people build up protection against the virus without them having to get the virus. COVID-19 vaccines are very effective at protecting vaccinated people against serious illness, hospitalization, or death if they do get infected. COVID-19 variants have emerged, but experts believe available COVID-19 vaccines still offer protection against circulating variants.

Two of the COVID-19 vaccines, Pfizer and Moderna, are called mRNA vaccines. The mRNA (messenger RNA) in these vaccines is genetic material that gives the body instructions to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19 disease. The mRNA COVID-19 vaccines do not and cannot change your genetic makeup (DNA). Another vaccine, Novavax, is a protein vaccine that uses copies of the spike protein from the virus that causes COVID-19 to teach your immune system how to recognize and fight the virus. Protein vaccines have been used for more than 30 years in the United States. **No COVID-19 virus is in any of the vaccines, and the vaccines cannot infect a person with COVID-19.** COVID-19 vaccines do not contain microchips, pork products, eggs, or preservatives.

What if I already had COVID-19?

Even if someone has already had COVID-19, they can get sick again. People who have had COVID-19 should get vaccinated, because COVID-19 vaccines will improve their protection.

Overview of COVID-19 vaccination

Vaccine recommendations and the number of doses you are recommended to get are different depending on your age, the vaccine you first received, and whether you have certain health conditions that weaken your

immune system. The medical provider can give you information on which vaccine you are getting and how many dose(s) you will need.

The medical provider who gave the vaccine will enter the information into Minnesota's immunization information system. This information helps the next medical provider know what vaccine was given and if they need any additional doses. Information entered in the immunization system is private health data. Only people with authorized access can use this system.

There is plenty of vaccine available for people in correctional facilities and out in the community. If someone needs another dose, even after they are released or moved to another facility, it is not going to be a problem. For more information about community vaccine options, go to Vaccines.gov and click "Find COVID-19 Vaccines," or call 1-833-431-2053 to find places with COVID-19 vaccine.

After someone is vaccinated, it takes about two weeks for the body to build up protection. After those two weeks, a person should have good protection against COVID-19.

People who have recently had COVID-19 can get vaccinated after you have completed your isolation period and are feeling better. People may consider waiting until 3 months to get vaccinated because they may have some protection after being infected with COVID-19, but that protection decreases quickly over time. Certain factors, such as age and personal risk of severe disease, could be reasons to get a vaccine sooner rather than later. The medical provider can help you determine when you should get vaccinated and are up to date with COVID-19 vaccine.

Immunocompromised people

Immunocompromised means a person has a weak immune system. People with advanced or untreated HIV infection, other immunocompromising conditions, or who take medications or therapies that weaken the immune system might be at increased risk for severe COVID-19.

The vaccine may not work as well in immunocompromised people because they may not have a strong immune response to the vaccine (they may have less protection). Because of this, CDC recommends that people with certain immunocompromising conditions receive additional doses of vaccine.

People should talk to the medical provider about their medical condition and what vaccine doses they need.

Side effects

Some side effects are common after vaccination. Side effects mean that the body is responding to the vaccine, but it is also OK if someone has no side effects at all. You may have:

- Sore arm
- Muscle aches
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Fever/chills

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