

COVID-19 VACCINE FACTS IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Correctional facilities (e.g., jails, prisons) have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Safe and effective vaccines are available for people who are incarcerated.

Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 is one of the most important steps you can take to protect yourself. With more people vaccinated, there is less COVID-19 disease. COVID-19 vaccine is free for everyone.

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.

Federal funding allowed medical researchers to quickly transition from vaccine development and testing to being able to make large amounts of vaccine. This process ensured that the vaccines were ready to distribute as soon as they were shown to be safe and effective.

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.

Four vaccines are available in the United States: Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, and Novavax. The COVID-19 vaccines offered in correctional facilities are the same vaccines given in the community. Pfizer, Moderna and Novavax are recommended over Johnson & Johnson because of the risk of a rare but serious blood clotting issue from the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine may still be an option for some people. You can ask what vaccine your facility is using.

VACCINE FACTS

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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 can prevent infection and are also very effective at protecting vaccinated people against serious illness, hospitalization, or death if they do get infected. New COVID-19 variants, such as Omicron, have emerged. Experts believe available COVID-19 vaccine still offers protection against the Omicron variant.
- 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 COVID-19 vaccine, Johnson & Johnson, uses a harmless strain of a common cold virus to help the body recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19 disease. 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, fetal tissue, 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.