

Fact Sheet: COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy

Historically, vaccines have led to a significant decrease in once highly transmissible diseases such as polio, smallpox, measles, mumps, rubella, and chicken pox. These are examples of some disease processes that have nearly been eradicated with vaccination. The COVID-19 vaccination is now recommended for everyone ages 6 months and older; children 5 years and older should have the booster if the requirements are met. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2022a).

What is vaccine hesitancy?

- Vaccine hesitancy is the reluctance to receive a vaccine even though the vaccine is widely available. (Indiana Department of Health, 2020).

There are many reasons why people might be hesitant to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

- Reasons most often stem from the lack of information or misinformation about the vaccine. (Indiana Department of Health, 2020).
- According to a survey conducted by the Kepro HCQU in the Southwestern PA region, the primary concerns providers have about the COVID-19 vaccine include:
 - The vaccine was developed too quickly.
 - Concern about vaccine side effects.

Was the COVID-19 vaccine developed too quickly?

- No. The COVID-19 vaccines were developed in record time, but they were created utilizing processes established and tested with various vaccines.
- The COVID-19 vaccine is a mRNA vaccine. The mRNA approach to vaccines is a result of two decades of work and strategies in vaccination development.
- Research began in 2003 and 2012 for development of vaccines for two common coronavirus infections known as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). Both are closely related to the virus that causes COVID-19. (Connecticut Department of Health, 2021)
- Development of the COVID-19 vaccine began as soon as the genetic code for the COVID-19 virus became available. Pfizer and Moderna have been researching mRNA technology for decades. Johnson and Johnson's adenovector vaccine technology has been around since the first vaccine was made in 1796 (Beaumont Health, 2021).
- The COVID-19 vaccines were extensively tested, and over 100 million individuals have been safely vaccinated (Johns Hopkins Medicine, 2021).

What are the COVID-19 vaccine side effects?

- Side effects are a normal sign that your body is building protection to the virus.
- Some people may experience side effects, while others will not. This is because everyone builds immunity differently.
- The most common short-term side effects experienced by those who receive the vaccine include:
 - Soreness and/or redness at the injection site
 - Muscle aches
 - Chills
 - Fever
 - Headache
 - Nausea
 - Fatigue

(Beaumont Health, 2021)

- Side effects normally go away after 24-48 hours; it is important to notify the doctor if they last longer.
- Many people are concerned about major allergic reactions. Only .001% of people vaccinated had anaphylaxis which occurred within 15 minutes of the vaccination. (Beaumont Health 2021). Therefore, all vaccine sites monitor individuals receiving the vaccine for at least 15 minutes before they leave the site.
- Millions of individuals have received the COVID-19 vaccine under the most intense safety monitoring in the history of vaccinations (Beaumont Health, 2021).

Is natural immunity from getting COVID-19 better than vaccine induced immunity?

Natural immunity is the result of contracting and fighting off the virus.

- COVID-19 has serious and life-threatening complications, and the course of the disease is often unpredictable.
- Vaccination might provide longer, more effective protection from the virus than natural immunity.
- A study published in August 2021 indicates that if you had COVID-19 before and are not vaccinated, your risk of getting reinfected is more than two times higher than for those who were infected and got vaccinated. (Johns Hopkins Medicine, 2021).

Who can I trust for accurate information about the COVID-19 vaccination?

- Physicians and health care providers. If you have questions or concerns about the vaccine or receiving the vaccine, talk with your physician or healthcare provider.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

- The Pennsylvania Department of Health.
 - <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>

How do I get vaccinated?

- The first step in getting vaccinated is to find a vaccine provider, which can be done by
 - visiting the website <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/How-Do-I-Get-a-COVID-19-Vaccine.html> or
 - calling 1-800-232-0233 to find locations near you.
- The second step is to contact a vaccine provider to schedule a vaccine appointment.
- The third step is to be sure to receive the correct number of doses for the vaccine.
 - The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require two doses; the Johnson and Johnson vaccine is a one-dose vaccine. (CDC, 2022b)
- The CDC has a COVID-19 vaccination schedule available for download at: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/downloads/COVID-19-vacc-schedule-at-a-glance-508.pdf>

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