



**PAHO**



# COVID-19 VACCINE

## Frequently Asked Questions



Vaccines save millions of lives each year. Vaccines work by training and preparing the body's natural defences — the immune system— to recognize and fight off the viruses and bacteria they target. If the body is exposed to those disease-causing germs later, the body is immediately ready to destroy them, preventing illness.

### Q. How does a COVID-19 vaccine work?

COVID-19 vaccines help our bodies develop immunity to the virus that causes COVID-19 without us having to get the illness. Different types of vaccines work in different ways to offer protection, but with all types of vaccines, the body is left with a supply of "memory" T-lymphocytes as well as B-lymphocytes that will remember how to fight that virus in the future. It typically takes a few weeks for the body to produce T-lymphocytes and B-lymphocytes after vaccination. Therefore, it is possible that a person could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and then get sick because the vaccine did not have enough time to provide protection.

Sometimes after vaccination, the process of building immunity can cause symptoms, such as fever. These symptoms are normal and are a sign that the body is building immunity.

### Q. What types of COVID-19 vaccines are being developed? How would they work?

Scientists around the world are developing many potential vaccines for COVID-19. These vaccines are all designed to teach the body's immune system to safely recognize and block the virus that causes COVID-19.

Several different types of potential vaccines for COVID-19 are in development, including:

- Inactivated or weakened virus vaccines, which use a form of the virus that has been inactivated or weakened so it doesn't cause disease, but still generates an immune response.
- Protein-based vaccines, which use harmless fragments of proteins or protein shells that mimic the COVID-19 virus to safely generate an immune response.
- Viral vector vaccines, which use a virus that has been genetically engineered so that it can't cause disease, but produces coronavirus proteins to safely generate an immune response.
- RNA and DNA vaccines, a cutting-edge approach that uses genetically engineered RNA or DNA to generate a protein that itself safely prompts an immune response.

### Q. Are there side effects from the COVID-19 vaccines?

Some people may experience pain and swelling on the arm where they received the shot. Fever, chills, tiredness and headache may also be experienced. If you receive the vaccine and think you are having an allergic reaction, seek medical care immediately.

### Q. What is the World Health Organization (WHO) doing to help accelerate COVID-19 vaccine research?

WHO is one of the leaders (with Gavi and CEPI) of a global effort known as COVAX, which is investing in the development of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines by pooling resources from many different countries. This includes the COVAX Facility, a global risk-sharing mechanism for pooled procurement and equitable distribution of eventual COVID-19 vaccines. In addition to investing in vaccine research and development, COVAX is helping scale up vaccine manufacturing capabilities and committing to buy doses of safe and effective vaccines, with the goal of distributing 2 billion doses where they're needed most, worldwide, by the end of 2021.

COVAX is the vaccine pillar of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, a global collaboration to accelerate development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines.

In addition, WHO is setting up "Solidarity" clinical trials that will efficiently evaluate potential COVID-19 vaccines at sites across the globe.

### Q. How is the research and development process being accelerated without compromising safety?

WHO and its partners are committed to accelerating the development of COVID-19 vaccines while maintaining the highest standards on safety. In the past, vaccines have been developed through a series of steps that can take many years. Now, given the urgent need for COVID-19 vaccines, unprecedented financial investments and scientific collaborations are changing how vaccines are developed. This means that some of the steps in the research and development process have been happening in parallel, while still maintaining strict clinical and safety standards. For example, some clinical trials are evaluating multiple vaccines at the same time. However, this does not make the studies any less rigorous.

### Q. Why should I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Getting vaccinated is one of many steps you can take to protect yourself and others from COVID-19. Protection from COVID-19 is critically important because for some people, it can cause severe illness or death. Stopping a pandemic requires using all the tools available. Vaccines work with your immune system so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. Other steps, like masks and social distancing, help reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus or spreading it to others. Together, COVID-19 vaccination and following Centers of Disease Control and Prevention's recommendations to protect yourself and others will offer the best protection from COVID-19.



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Pan American Health Organization  
World Health Organization



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### Q. Will COVID-19 vaccines provide long-term protection?

It's too early to know if COVID-19 vaccines will provide long-term protection. Additional research is needed to answer this question. However, it's encouraging that available data suggest that most people who recover from COVID-19 develop an immune response that provides at least some period of protection against reinfection – although we're still learning how strong this protection is, and how long it lasts.

Most COVID-19 vaccines being tested or reviewed now are using two dose regimens.

### Q. How quickly could COVID-19 vaccines stop the pandemic?

The impact of COVID-19 vaccines on the pandemic will depend on several factors. These include factors such as the effectiveness of the vaccines; how quickly they are approved, manufactured, and delivered; and how many people get vaccinated. Most scientists anticipate that, like most other vaccines, COVID-19 vaccines will not be 100% effective. WHO is working to help ensure that any approved vaccines are as effective as possible, so they can have the greatest impact on the pandemic.

### Q. Will other vaccines help protect me from COVID-19?

Currently, there is no evidence that any existing vaccines will protect against COVID-19.

However, scientists are studying whether some existing vaccines – such as the Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine, which is used to prevent tuberculosis – are also effective for COVID-19. WHO will evaluate evidence from these studies when available. This vaccine is currently not given in The Bahamas.

### Q. When will a COVID-19 vaccine be available in The Bahamas?

Although COVID-19 vaccines have been introduced in the United Kingdom and the United States, The Government of The Bahamas has signed on to the COVAX facility to receive the COVID-19 vaccines. The aim is to have vaccines available by the end of March 2021, if not sooner.

### Q. Which COVID-19 vaccine will The Bahamas receive?

Once the COVAX facility and The Bahamas Government have completed various assessments the vaccine that is right for The Bahamas will be determined.

### Q. Are there special considerations on who should get the COVID-19 vaccine first?

The initial supply of COVID-19 vaccine in The Bahamas is expected to be limited at first. Those recommended to be in the priority grouping include but are not limited to healthcare workers, first responders, adults 65 years and older and people of all ages with comorbidities and underlying health conditions. As vaccine availability increases, vaccination recommendations will expand to include more groups.

### Q. Will there be a charge to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

Vaccine doses purchased and administered by the Government of The Bahamas will be given to the Bahamian people at no cost. However, vaccination providers will be able to charge an administration fee for giving the shot to someone.

### Q. Since the vaccine is not available in country yet, what can I do to help protect myself from getting COVID-19?

You should cover your mouth and nose with a mask when around others, avoid close contact with people who are sick, stay 6 feet away from others, avoid crowds, frequently clean and disinfect objects and wash your hands often with soap and water.

### Q. I still have questions about vaccination, what should I do?

As information pertaining to the COVID-19 vaccine continues to be collected, if you have questions be sure to talk to your healthcare provider. He or she can provide you with science-based advice about the vaccines.

When looking online for information about the COVID-19 vaccines be sure to consult only trustworthy sources.

\*Sources  
World Health Organization  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Bahamas Government