

# COVID-19 VACCINE INFORMATION



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# COVID-19 VACCINE

**V**accines are an important part of stopping the spread of COVID-19. Vaccines reduce the risk of getting a disease by working with your body to build protection. When you are given a vaccine, your body responds by creating soldiers called antibodies.

Vaccines usually contain a small part of the germ/virus so that the body can make antibodies that fight the disease. The portion that is in the vaccine will not cause the disease in the person receiving the vaccine.

## ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT VACCINES

### Is it safe to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

**Yes.** Studies show that COVID-19 vaccines are **safe and effective**. Vaccines go through many stages of testing, including testing thousands of volunteers, making sure it is safe for people to receive. Experts check the results from trials and decide if the vaccine is safe to use before it is approved and distributed.

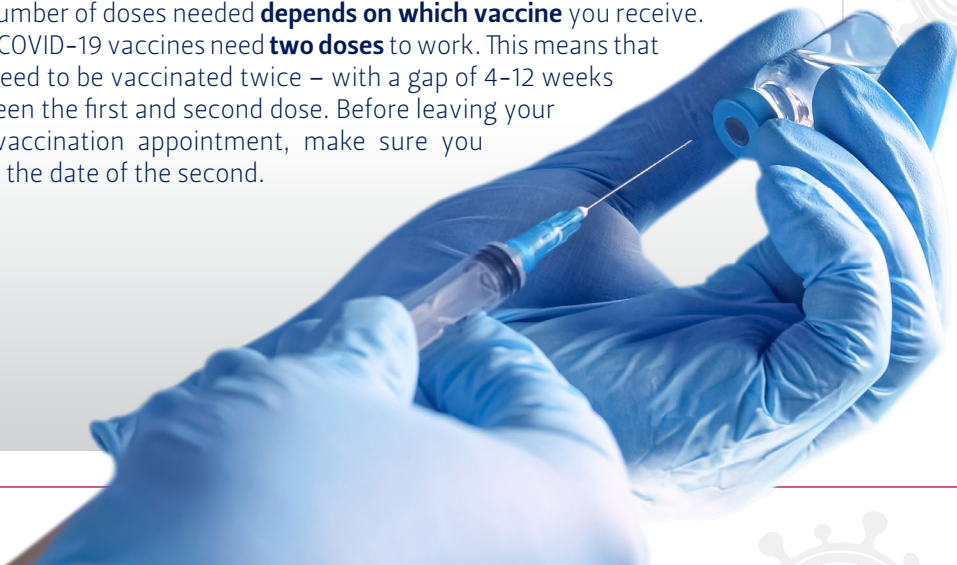
### Can I get COVID-19 by taking the vaccine?

COVID-19 vaccine **cannot make you sick** with COVID-19. There is **no live coronavirus** in it.

### How many doses of the COVID-19 vaccine will I need to get?

The number of doses needed **depends on which vaccine** you receive.

**Most** COVID-19 vaccines need **two doses** to work. This means that you need to be vaccinated twice – with a gap of 4-12 weeks between the first and second dose. Before leaving your first vaccination appointment, make sure you know the date of the second.



## Can I get vaccinated against COVID-19 while I am currently sick with COVID-19?

**No.** People with COVID-19 who have symptoms should wait to be vaccinated until they have recovered from their illness and meet the criteria for discontinuing isolation.

## Will a COVID-19 vaccination protect me from getting sick with COVID-19?

COVID-19 vaccination works by teaching your body how to recognise and **fight the virus** that causes COVID-19, and this **protects you** from getting very sick with COVID-19.



## How are vaccines administered?

Vaccines are mostly given through **injection**. The vaccine will be given by a health-care worker in places such as a hospital, clinic, pharmacy, or doctor's surgery.

## Who can get vaccinated now?

**When it is your turn** to be vaccinated, the Department of Health **will inform you** about the registration process and the procedure to be followed to receive your vaccination.

## Will a COVID-19 vaccine alter my DNA?

**No.** COVID-19 vaccines **do not change** or interact with **your DNA** in any way. Both mRNA and viral vector COVID-19 vaccines deliver instructions (genetic material) to our cells to start building protection against the virus that causes COVID-19.



## Which vaccines have been approved for use in South Africa?

The following vaccines have been approved for use in South Africa by the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA):

- Johnson & Johnson
- Pfizer
- Sinovac
- AstraZeneca



## What is the difference between these vaccines?

Vaccine brand name	Who can get this vaccine?	How many shots do you need?	When are you fully vaccinated?
Johnson & Johnson	People <b>18</b> years and older	<b>One</b> shot	<b>Two weeks</b> after your shot
Pfizer – BioNTech	People <b>16</b> years and older	<b>Two</b> shots given <b>six weeks</b> (42 days) apart	<b>Two weeks</b> after your second shot
Sinovac	People <b>18</b> years and older	<b>Two</b> shots given two to <b>four weeks</b> apart	<b>Two weeks</b> after your second shot
	People <b>18</b> years and older	<b>Two</b> shots given <b>eight to twelve weeks</b> apart	<b>Two weeks</b> after your second shot
AstraZeneca	<p><i>The Government of South Africa has decided not to make use of the AstraZeneca vaccine for now, since it proved less effective against the predominant variant of the virus in South Africa. This decision can be revised when new information becomes available.</i></p> <p>SOURCE: <a href="https://sacoronavirus.co.za/vaccine-updates/">https://sacoronavirus.co.za/vaccine-updates/</a></p>		



## BEFORE YOU GET THE VACCINE

### Do your research

- Learn more about the **different types** of [COVID-19 vaccines](#), [how they work](#), and how vaccinations are being rolled out in [South Africa](#).
- Make sure you rely on accurate vaccination information by checking that it comes from a trustworthy source, such as the [Department of Health](#), [WHO](#) or [UNICEF](#).
- Cross-check vaccination information that you find online, particularly if it comes from unknown sources.
- If you have any doubts, talk to staff at your nearest health facility, or a health worker.

### GETTING READY

#### Make sure you have

- a **mask** that covers your nose and mouth – and fits tightly and comfortably;  
[More guidance on masks here](#);
- **hand sanitiser**;
- the **notification** you **received** about your appointment;
- your **ID**.



**Wear loose** or **short sleeves** that can be rolled up easily, so that health workers have easy access to your arm.

**Tell** your health provider or vaccinator if you have **any health issues** or are taking any medications, including any painkillers.

**Cancel** your appointment **if you have COVID-19** or the symptoms.

**If you have COVID-19** or its symptoms on the day of your vaccination appointment, **do not go** to the appointment. This is because you **could spread the virus** to others at the vaccination centre.

Get in touch with your vaccination centre by message, phone, or email to **let them know that you will not be attending** your appointment because you have COVID-19 symptoms.

You can **get vaccinated** if it has been **14 days** since you last experienced COVID-19 symptoms.



## DURING VACCINATION

### AT THE VACCINATION CENTRE

**When waiting in line** outside the vaccination centre, and once you are inside:

- Keep your **mask on at all times**.
- **Do not touch** your **mask** once it is on and properly fitted.
- **Keep** at least **one metre distance** between yourself and others.
- **Sanitise** or wash your **hands** after touching door handles, surfaces, or furniture.
- Do **not touch** your **face**.

All COVID-19 vaccines, regardless of the manufacturer, are administered in the same way. The vaccine will be injected into the muscle of your upper arm. It should take no longer than a few seconds and may cause some pain.

**Keep your mask on** during your appointment and turn your **face away** from the face of the vaccinator – to **keep** you both **safe**.

#### **If you are feeling nervous or anxious:**

- Remember that it is just a small prick that could save your life.
- Take slow, deep breaths.
- Look away from the needle.



# I CHOOSE VACCINATION



#StopCOVID-19



# I CHOOSE VACCINATION



#StopCOVID-19



# I CHOOSE VACCINATION



#StopCOVID-19



# I CHOOSE VACCINATION



#StopCOVID-19



# I CHOOSE VACCINATION



#StopCOVID-19



## **Look out** for the COVID-19 **photo booths**

stationed at the COVID-19  
vaccination site at the Universitas  
Academic Hospital in Bloemfontein,  
and the Thekolohelong Old-Age  
Home in Phuthaditjhaba, Qwaqwa.

Share your photo with us by emailing it to  
Lunga Luthuli at [LuthuliLL@ufs.ac.za](mailto:LuthuliLL@ufs.ac.za)

# AFTER VACCINATION

## Expect minor **side effects**

After being vaccinated, some side effects are normal and expected. Side effects are a sign that your body is building immune protection.

**Common side effects** observed with COVID-19 vaccines include:

- Some pain, swelling, and redness on the arm where you received the vaccine
- Chills or mild fever
- Tiredness
- Headaches
- Joint pain or muscle ache

These side effects typically **go away within a few days**.

**After** being vaccinated, you need to **stay** in an **observation** area for **15–30** minutes.

This is to monitor your reaction to the vaccine and make sure that you do not experience any severe side effects.



**Severe side effects** are very rare, but could include:

- Itching
- Fainting
- Vomiting
- Severe allergic reaction
- Wheezing, difficulty in breathing, or shortness of breath.

Let a health worker know immediately if you experience any of these side effects.

Severe side effects, while very rare, are most likely to **appear within** the first **30 minutes** after being vaccinated. Your stay in the observation area means that qualified help is on hand in the unlikely event that you do experience any severe side effects.

## PREPARING FOR YOUR **SECOND** VACCINATION APPOINTMENT

Most COVID-19 vaccines need two doses to work. This means that you need to be vaccinated twice – **with a gap of 4–12 weeks between the first and second dose**.

**Before leaving** your first vaccination appointment, **make sure you know the date of the second**.

It is important that you get your second dose, even if you have experienced side effects from the first – unless a vaccination provider or your doctor tells you not to get the second dose.



## WHEN YOU GET HOME

### Take care of yourself

- If you experience side effects, it may affect your daily activities for a few days.
- Some people may develop fever, muscle pain and swelling, redness, pain or a tingling sensation at the site of the injection for one to two days. Make sure that you drink plenty of fluids.
- You can take some paracetamol to help ease any of these sensations. If you do, make sure you follow the dosage instructions from the pharmacist or provider.
- If your symptoms are more severe or last longer than a week, tell the health workers who gave you the vaccine.
- Care for the arm where the vaccine was injected.
- You can reduce any pain or discomfort in the arm where you got the vaccine by applying a cool, clean, wet washcloth over the area.
- Enter your second vaccination appointment on your calendar.
- As mentioned, most COVID-19 vaccines require two doses to work. It takes time for your body to build protection, and **you may not be protected against the virus until two weeks after your second vaccination.**
  - It can be several weeks or longer between your first and second appointments – so it is important that you do not forget!
  - **Enter the date of your second vaccination appointment on your calendar** and keep your appointment information in a safe place.



# KEEP UP **PREVENTIVE** BEHAVIOUR

It is important that you continue to follow preventive measures after being vaccinated. This is because COVID-19 vaccines have been proven effective in preventing people from developing the virus, but we do not yet know if it prevents people from transmitting infection to others.

## Continue to protect yourself and others by

- washing your hands with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds, or using hand sanitiser – as often as you can;
- keeping at least one metre distance between yourself and others;
- meeting people in well-ventilated or outdoor spaces; and
- wearing a mask when you cannot keep your distance from others or are inside a public space.

This is especially important up to two weeks after your second vaccination – during this period, your body is still building protection against the virus.

## Share and celebrate

Being vaccinated is a huge moment and a huge relief – enjoy it!

Talk to others about your experience

Encourage others to get vaccinated and talk about the process and how it made you feel.

SOURCE: UNICEF, NICD

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