Vaccines

What they are and how they can save your life

Vaccines are a breakthrough of modern medicine – and are the best protection we have against many serious illnesses. The World Health Organization estimates that vaccines can save between 2 and 3 million lives every year.[1]

What is a vaccine?

Vaccines are a safe and effective way of protecting people against diseases and illnesses. When you get a vaccine, your immune system will develop resistance to that disease. You typically get a vaccine as a shot, but some can also be given as a nasal spray you inhale or a medication you drink.

How do vaccines work?

When you get a vaccine, your body will produce antibodies against that disease. Antibodies are proteins produced naturally by your immune system to fight disease. Your body will then be able to recognize and fight the disease if you're ever exposed to it later. This can significantly lower the impact of a disease or prevent you from catching it.

Why should I get vaccinated?

Vaccines are a safe way to prevent disease and save lives. Plus, they can protect you against a disease for a year, decades, or even a lifetime – depending on the specific disease. That's what makes vaccines so powerful. Rather than treating a disease after you get it, vaccines prevent you from getting sick in the first place.

(continues on back)

1. "Vaccines and Immunization: What is Vaccination," World Health Organization, December 31, 2020, www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/vaccines-and-immunization-what-is-vaccination.

(continued from front)

What you need to know about the COVID-19 vaccine

How does the COVID-19 vaccine work?

SARS-CoV-2 is the virus that causes COVID-19. The COVID-19 vaccine was created to prevent this virus from attacking your body and making you sick. The vaccine was designed to make your immune system respond and develop immunity. It does this by helping your body make antibodies to block the virus. Think of these antibodies like bodyguards. The antibodies stop the virus from reproducing in your body and making you sick.

How effective is the COVID-19 vaccine?

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is 95% effective at preventing COVID-19, and the Moderna vaccine is 94.1% effective, according to Food and Drug Administration (FDA) data. In addition, Johnson & Johnson has applied for emergency use authorization for a single-dose vaccine.

Does effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine differ by age, sex, race, or ethnicity?

Effectiveness of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccine doesn't differ by age, sex, race, or ethnicity. The results of vaccine efficacy come from clinical trials that included a diverse range and age of participants, including males and females from a variety of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Is it safe to get a COVID-19 vaccine if you have an ongoing health condition like diabetes?

If you have an ongoing health condition like diabetes, you should talk to your doctor and confirm it's safe to get the COVID-19 vaccine. In general, if you have an ongoing condition, you're at an increased risk of getting severely sick from COVID-19. So, getting the COVID-19 vaccine is one way to protect yourself from the virus. According to the FDA, people with ongoing conditions can get the COVID-19 vaccine if they haven't had an allergic reaction to any of the ingredients in the vaccine.[2] It's best to talk with your doctor so they can assess your personal situation.

Is there a cost for a COVID-19 vaccine?

No. You should not be charged anything for a COVID-19 vaccination no matter where you get it. In fact, you should be suspicious of any entity that wants to charge you for a vaccine. Vaccine doses were purchased with taxpayer dollars and are required by the federal government to be given at no cost.

2. "Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccination," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, January 25, 2021, www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html.

Learn more at **kp.org/covidvaccine**

KAISER PERMANENTE®

634869636 February 2021