Effectively Engaging People Who Are Hesitant About the COVID-19 Vaccine

Frequently Asked Questions

The following questions are raised regularly. Answering them directly and being able to provide trustworthy sources where people can research further is important. Wherever possible, it is recommended that you provide these answers verbally or through videos with written prompts. Do not rely solely on written fact sheets.

General questions about the vaccines

- What's in the vaccines?
    - Each COVID-19 vaccine contains a key ingredient that prepares your immune system to fight the virus, along with a few other basic ingredients such as potassium chloride, fats, and sucrose.
    - None of the COVID-19 vaccines contain a weakened version of the virus.
    - You can go to www.vaccines.gov to learn detailed information about each COVID-19 vaccine—including how they work, how they were tested, the ingredients in each vaccine, and expected side effects. For COVID-19 vaccine information in Spanish, you can go to www.DeTiDepende.org.
- How do the vaccines work?
    - All three COVID-19 vaccines work by giving your immune system instructions on how to recognize the virus and how to fight it.
    - None of the COVID-19 vaccines change your genetic code or DNA.
- Is this new technology? How did they develop the vaccines so quickly?
    - Medical experts have used the COVID-19 vaccines' mRNA technology for over a decade to fight cancer and viruses like SARS. These successes enabled medical researchers and scientists to develop these COVID-19 vaccines more quickly than earlier vaccines.
- How do we know the vaccines are safe?
    - The COVID-19 vaccines were put through a rigorous and transparent series of tests. More than 119,000 U.S. volunteers from racially diverse groups participated in COVID-19 vaccine trials, including 19,000 Hispanic, 12,000 Black, 4,300 Asian Pacific Islander and 650 Native American women and men.
    - Since the trials hundreds of millions of people have been vaccinated.
    - The FDA has granted full approval to the Pfizer vaccine.
- What does it mean for a vaccine to receive full approval from the FDA?

    - For full approval of a new drug, the FDA requires extensive data on safety and effectiveness, inspection of manufacturing facilities, and a comprehensive review of all clinical and "real-world" use.
    - All three COVID-19 vaccines have been proven to be safe and effective, based on extensive clinical trials and the fact that nearly 200 million Americans have received at least one shot without major complications.
- What do the vaccines do? Can't I still get COVID-19?
    - All three COVID-19 vaccines nearly eliminate the risk of severe illness, hospitalization and death from the virus.

Questions about logistics to receive the vaccine?

- How much does it cost to get the CODIV-19 vaccine?
    - The vaccines are completely free for everyone in Colorado and the United States.
- Do I have to show proof of identity or citizenship to receive the vaccine?
    - People are not required to show any form of identification, proof of citizenship, or a driver's license to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. You may be asked for these types of documents, but you cannot be turned away if you say you don't have them.
- Who is eligible to get a vaccine?
    - All Colorado residents ages 12 years and older are now eligible for a vaccine.
- Who has received the vaccine so far?
    - As of June 2021, over 2.5 million Coloradans have been vaccinated with at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. This includes over 230,000 Hispanic Coloradans, 68,000 Black Coloradans, 78,000 Asian/Pacific Islander Coloradans, and 13,000 Native American Coloradans.
- Are healthcare professionals getting the vaccine?
    - Our own doctors are getting the COVID-19 vaccine. Over 90% of doctors have gotten a COVID-19 vaccine.
- What happens once I get the vaccine?
    - According to the CDC, fully vaccinated Americans no longer need to wear masks or maintain social distance either indoors or outdoors—with some exceptions such as hospitals, nursing homes, or when traveling by bus, plane, or train.

Questions about side effects

- What are the side effects of getting the vaccine?
    - As with any vaccine, some side effects are possible—but these side effects are manageable and typically minor. For example, your arm might be sore or you might experience fatigue, a headache, or chills for one or two days. These reactions do not mean anything is wrong—they mean your immune system is ramping up to protect you from COVID-19.
- How common are side effects?
    - The likelihood of experiencing a severe side effect from a COVID-19 vaccine is less than 0.5%.

    - More than 150 million people in the U.S. have received at least one dose of these COVID-19 vaccines, with very few people reporting severe side effects.
- I have a pre-existing condition, will I feel immediate side effects?
    - If you have a history of allergic reactions, nurses will monitor you for 30 minutes after getting a COVID-19 vaccine, and if none are present, will send you home.

Questions about the vaccines and specific populations

- Are the vaccines safe for pregnant women?
    - The COVID-19 vaccines are safe for pregnant women and their developing babies and do not cause any problems with the pregnancy. And babies born from vaccinated mothers have been born with their own COVID-19 antibodies, protecting the baby too.
- Do the vaccines interfere with fertility?
    - There is no evidence that the COVID-19 vaccines interfere with men conceiving children or with women getting pregnant.
- Are the vaccines safe for kids?
    - Based on rigorous testing, pediatricians agree that the COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective for children. Children's immune systems are different from adults', but they share enough in common to expect similar levels of protection.

Questions about the COVID-19 Variants

- What is a variant?
    - Viruses constantly change through mutation. A variant has one or more mutations that differentiate it from other variants in circulation.
    - Variants of viruses like COVID-19 can be more contagious, cause more serious illness, and make the virus less responsive to treatments, such as a vaccine.
    - Scientists and doctors fear that the more a virus is able to mutate (i.e., the more variants that exist), the more likely we are to see a super-strain of COVID-19.
- What is the Delta Variant and why are people worried about it?
    - The Delta variant is a strain of the COVID vaccine.
    - The Delta variant is dangerous. It's more than twice as contagious as the original COVID-19 virus.
    - COVID-19 is now putting people of all ages in the hospital - not just the elderly or those with underlying health issues.
    - As of August 2021, the Delta variant made up over 90% of all COVID-19 cases.
    - Vaccines provide strong protection against serious illness and death from COVID-19, including the variant.
    - There's now a vaccine that's fully approved by the FDA.
    - More than 170 million Americans (and 96% of doctors) have been safely vaccinated.
    - Serious side effects are extremely unlikely.
- What is the Mu variant?

- The Mu variant is the fifth coronavirus variant of interest being monitored by global health organizations. As of mid-September, the variant accounted for most cases in Colombia, Chile and Peru but only some cases in the U.S.