



COVID-19 Commonly Asked Questions



A message from Dr. Valerie A. Boaz and the Hamilton County Health Department:

"This COVID-19 vaccine is what we have been waiting for to curb this pandemic. We do not want anyone to miss out on getting this vaccine because of some questions or concerns that could have been addressed."

Who can get the COVID-19 vaccine now in Hamilton County? Anyone 12 years of age or older may receive COVID-19 vaccine. 12-17 year olds may only receive the Pfizer vaccine, which is a two-dose vaccine and licensed for those 12 years of age and older. The two dose Moderna and one-dose Johnson & Johnson (Jansen) vaccines are licensed for those 18 years of age and older.

What is the benefit of getting a COVID-19 vaccine? Should I wait to get the vaccine? Getting a COVID-19 vaccine now is the best and safest way to protect yourself against COVID-19. COVID-19 can have serious, life-threatening complications, and there is no way to know how the disease will affect you. If someone gets infected, they could spread the disease to family, friends and others around them. When a large segment of the population is immune to the infection, then "herd immunity" develops and that stops the infection from passing from one person to another.

The COVID-19 vaccines were approved so quickly. Are they safe? Yes. The COVID-19 vaccines meet the same rigorous safety and effectiveness standards by the FDA as all other types of vaccines in the United States. In addition, the vaccines are being rigorously monitored for safety on an ongoing basis.

How effective are the COVID-19 vaccines? The currently available COVID-19 vaccines are very effective, especially in preventing severe illness, hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19. A person is considered fully vaccinated if 14 or more days have elapsed after the second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or 14 or more days after the one dose of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine.

Can I get the COVID-19 vaccine if I need other vaccines? Yes. COVID-19 vaccines and other vaccines may now be administered without regard to timing. This includes simultaneous administration of COVID-19 vaccines with other vaccines on the same day, as well as co-administration within 14 days.

What are the possible side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine? Will it make me sick? The body starts building protection to COVID-19 after vaccination. Some people may have some side effects after receiving the vaccine, which are normal signs that the body is building protection to COVID-19. Others may not have side effects, but the body is still building protection. The local side effects are pain, redness and swelling at the injection site. Other reactions are fever, chills, tiredness, headache, body aches and flu-like symptoms. Serious adverse events are rare, and a small number of people have experienced blood clots after receiving the Jansen COVID-19 vaccine. V-Safe is a CDC smartphone-based tool where people can report any side effects after getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

How will the COVID-19 vaccines affect my body? The COVID-19 vaccines work by helping your immune system build protection against the virus in case you are exposed in the future. The COVID-19 vaccines do not enter the nucleus of your cells and do not change or interact with your DNA or reproductive system in any way. The vaccines do not contain the live virus, so they cannot infect you with coronavirus.

If I am a young, healthy adult, do I need to get vaccinated? Yes. Young, healthy adults are also at risk of getting COVID-19. Even though young adults may not experience symptoms or may have mild symptoms if they get COVID-19, they are at the same risk for long-term symptoms from having had the infection. Young adults are also just as likely as older people to spread the infection. They should get vaccinated to protect themselves and others they may be around, such as family, friends and co-workers, etc., some of whom may be at higher risk of infection with coronavirus.

If I am pregnant, should I get vaccinated? Yes. Pregnant women are considered at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 and are eligible to get the COVID-19 vaccine. Since COVID-19 vaccines have not been studied in pregnant women, they are encouraged to consult their medical provider.

If I have a chronic medical condition or am immunocompromised, can I get the vaccine? Yes. People with chronic medical conditions, including autoimmune diseases, Bell's palsy and Guillain-Barre', may get the vaccine. People with immunocompromising conditions may get the vaccine, but may not mount the same level of protection in response to the vaccine as those who are not immunocompromised. The COVID-19 vaccine will not interfere with medications.

If I already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine? Yes. Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that reinfection with COVID-19 is possible, you should be vaccinated regardless of whether you already had COVID-19 infection. If someone was treated for COVID-19 symptoms with monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma, or if there is a history of multisystem inflammatory syndrome linked to COVID-19, consideration should be given to waiting 90 days before getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

If I have allergies, can I get the vaccine? Yes. The vaccine does not contain eggs, latex or preservatives. People with allergies to foods, such as peanuts and shellfish, pets, venom or environmental agents or oral medications may receive the vaccine.

Who should not receive the vaccine? Someone should not get the vaccine if they are allergic to any of the vaccine components or if they had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Is an appointment required to get the vaccine at a Health Department site? No. An appointment is not necessary, but if someone wishes, they may make an appointment online at vaccine.hamiltontn.gov or by calling 423-209-5398. In addition, a full list of providers and pharmacies offering COVID-19 vaccine in the Hamilton County area (by zip code) is available online at <https://vaccinefinder.org/search>

What if I cannot get to a Health Department vaccination site? Free transportation to the Health Department's vaccine sites is based on availability. Please call 423-209-8383 in advance to arrange.

How can I get more information?

Hamilton County Health Department

Website: health.hamiltontn.org

Hotline: For Questions, call 423-209-8383 and speak to a Health Department representative.

Newsletter: health.hamiltontn.org - Click the Connect with Us button to sign up for the newsletter. Be sure and check your email SPAM folder and confirm.

Facebook page: @HamiltonTNHealthDept

Instagram: @hamiltoncotn_health

Twitter: @hamiltonhealth

