



COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ's: Mandatory Vaccine Policy

Following the announcement made by Mike Jarvis regarding the **mandatory vaccine policy** (effective 1 January 2022, and the vaccination requirement effective 1 March 2022), we understand that many of you may still be anxious or fearful of receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

The following list of FAQ's aims to clarify some of the common concerns relating to the COVID-19 vaccine, and to provide helpful and factual information about it.

Useful resources

- Click [here](#) to anonymously submit any questions you may have concerning the COVID-19 vaccine
- Click [here](#) to access the Africa-wide COVID-19 toolkit
- Click [here](#) for steps on how to log your COVID-19 vaccine status
- Click [here](#) to access the Deloitte COVID-19 self-reporting tool
- Click [here](#) for an important Q&A series from WHO about the safety of the COVID-19 vaccines.

COVID-19 Vaccine questions answered by medical professionals

Q: Who should be excluded from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine?

A: Medical professionals can best advise individuals on whether they should receive a COVID-19 vaccine or not. However, based on available evidence, **people with the following health conditions** should generally be excluded from COVID-19 vaccinations in order to avoid possible adverse effects:

- If you have a history of severe **allergic reactions** to any ingredients of the COVID-19 vaccine.
- If you have a **chronic condition** where your doctor has specifically advised you not to receive the vaccine. The CDC has stipulated that the COVID-19 vaccines are very safe for most chronic conditions. However, please consult with your medical doctor to verify this on your specific situation.
- If you are currently sick or **experiencing symptoms of COVID-19**, however, you are eligible to be vaccinated once your primary symptoms have subsided.

Q: How much does the vaccine cost?

A: You will not be charged for the vaccine. No form of payment will be requested from you at any vaccination station. Those with medical aid should bring their medical aid information along as this will need to be provided.

Q: What is the link between the COVID-19 vaccine and allergic reactions?

A: A severe allergic reaction – such as anaphylaxis – is a **potential, yet rare, side effect** with any vaccine. In persons with a known risk - including previous experience of an allergic reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine, or any of the known components in the vaccine - precautions may need to be taken. The World Health Organisation (WHO) **recommends that healthcare providers assess patient medical history** to determine if a patient is at risk for severe allergic reaction to a COVID-19 vaccine. All immunisation providers should be trained to recognise severe allergic reactions and take practical steps to treat such reactions if they occur.

Q: What impact does the Pfizer vaccine have on one's DNA?

A: The Pfizer vaccine consists of mRNA. The mRNA molecules contain the genetic material that provide instructions for our body to make a viral protein ("spike protein") that triggers an immune response within our bodies. The immune response is what causes our bodies to make the antibodies against the Coronavirus. Published research from vaccine manufacturers indicates that the RNA then disintegrates and **does not interact with your DNA**.

Q: If I don't get the vaccine, how does it affect those around me?

A:

1. Vaccination **lowers the risk of hospitalisation and death**. This reduces pressure on healthcare resources which we all depend on (vaccinated and unvaccinated).
2. Vaccination helps with **opening communities back up**. As fewer people die from COVID-19, **lockdown measures are eased**.
3. It is believed that vaccinations will **lower the emergence of new variants**. Research on this is ongoing.

Q: What are the side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine?

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

- pain, swelling and redness on the arm where you received the vaccine
- chills or mild fever
- tiredness
- headaches
- joint pain or muscle ache.

Tip: Increase your fluid intake. These side effects typically go away in a few days.

Q: Is it possible that someone vaccinated against COVID-19 will still get infected?

A: Yes, while COVID-19 vaccines have high levels of efficacy, no vaccine is 100% protective. As a result, it is possible to contract COVID-19 after vaccination, however the vaccine will allow your body to fight the virus and possibly **limit severe sickness and hospitalisation**. Several factors such as a person's age, their underlying health conditions or previous exposure to COVID-19 may have an impact on a vaccine's effectiveness. Even as COVID-19 vaccines are rolled out, we continue to practice all public health measures that work, such as physical distancing, masks, and handwashing.

Q: Is it safe for pregnant women, those planning to be pregnant and breastfeeding mothers to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

A: The original safety data on the vaccines did not include pregnant women. There is limited data on the impact of the vaccines on pregnancy or your unborn child. As a result of this, countries have taken different stances on vaccination during pregnancy. There is a **growing shift towards allowing pregnant women to get vaccinated** as they are classified as a high-risk group for severe COVID-19. In Uganda and South Africa for example, health authorities are encouraging pregnant women to get vaccinated. If you are unsure, schedule an appointment with your healthcare provider to understand the policy in your country.

Q: Should I get vaccinated if I've had COVID-19?

A: Even if you have already had COVID-19, **you should be vaccinated**. The protection one gains from having COVID-19 varies from person to person, and it's unknown how long natural immunity might last.

Q: Do the vaccines protect against other variants?

A: The COVID-19 vaccines are **expected to provide at least some protection against new virus variants and are effective at preventing serious illness and death** by creating a broad immune response. Any virus changes or mutations should not make vaccines completely ineffective. If any of these vaccines become less effective against one or more variants, it will be possible to change the composition of the vaccines to protect against these variants. Data continues to be collected and analysed on new COVID-19 variants.

Q: According to the CDC COVID-19 fact sheet, there's no approved vaccine for COVID-19. They state that this vaccine is still under trial period. With all this information, will we be forced to take this vaccine or be polarised for not taking it?

A: On 23 August 2021, the **FDA granted full approval for Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine**. Although the widely available vaccines for COVID-19 have been shown to be safe and highly effective through intense study and research, the FDA's announcement should instil confidence in those who, until now, have been wary of the emergency use designation given to these vaccines.

The message from the FDA is that this **vaccine is safe and highly effective in preventing severe illness, hospitalisation and death** due to COVID-19.

References:

1. Dr Nikki Connellan
2. Dr Bolaji Obadeyi
3. Dr Precious Mlingo
4. Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
5. World Health Organisation (WHO)

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