Goodman Physical Therapy: COVID-19 Vaccines Fact Sheet (Jan 2021)

How does the COVID-19 vaccine work?

The two vaccines being used in the U.S. (Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna) use messenger RNA (mRNA) which delivers a small genetic "message" that causes your own cells to make a protein that resembles the spike on the outer shell of the tiny COVID-19 virus. Your immune system then recognizes this protein as foreign, and produces specific antibodies and specialized immune cells (T-lymphocytes and B-lymphocytes) that quickly spring into action if the virus itself shows up in the future. mRNA from the vaccine never enters the nucleus of the cell and does not affect or interact with a person's DNA. It's the same technology that's been used with cancer patients and with SARS.

Who should get the vaccine?

Everyone over the age of 16 years old can get a vaccine, unless you are known to have an allergic reaction to the ingredients in the vaccine (read the FACT sheet on the vaccine) or have an active infection and deemed not safe by your doctor. Kids under the age of 16 were not in the vaccine studies and so more safety data is needed before they will be included. Pregnant or lactating women, and people who are immunocompromised are able to get the vaccine. Those with questions should discuss with their Primary Care Physicians before receiving it and read the Vaccine FACT SHEETS.

What are the common side effects?

Common side effects may include pain around the area of the injection, feeling tired, headache, muscle aches, and less commonly, fever. So far, severe side effects have been reported to be very rare with these current COVID-19 vaccines. As with all vaccines, there have been rare reports of serious allergic reactions to the vaccine. If you have ever had a severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis to any ingredient in either of the COVID-19 vaccines, it is not considered safe to get that specific vaccine. If you have a history of severe allergic reactions, please speak to your healthcare provider for guidance before being vaccinated.

I've had COVID-19 already so should I still get a vaccine?

Consult with your doctor. At this point, there is not enough evidence to know how long immunity from a COVID-19 infection lasts. It's also unclear whether vaccination or infection produces the strongest immunity. However, if you had COVID-19 and were treated with monoclonal antibodies, you should wait 90 days before getting the vaccine. If you've had COVID-19 and not treated for it you may have the antibodies for up to 6 months, and should consult your doctor as to what to do.

How safe are these Covid-19 vaccines?

While the specific vaccines are new, the ways in which they create an immune response have either been in testing or in widespread use for many years. The underlying technology has been proven safe on thousands of volunteers. Only the specific COVID-19 genetic message is truly new. The safety standards of the FDA remain stringent and the safety of the vaccines will continue to be closely monitored. Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines safely deliver very high immunity against this virus.

Why should I get the vaccine?

The vaccination when given to the largest number of people possible is the most effective way to bring the current pandemic under control. The new aggressively contagious mutations may be a problem if we wait any longer. **We need 75-80% of the population vaccinated for us to move out of this pandemic** so we all need to do our part when possible. **Ages 16 and up will be offered vaccines**. **Pregnant women** should get vaccinated when offered unless their doctor says they should not due to an underlying condition. THERE IS NO LIVE VIRUS IN THE VACCINES SO THE VACCINE IS NOT GIVING YOU THE VIRUS. **You are 50% immunized 12 days after the first dose and 95% immunity 7 days after the 2nd dose**. We do not know for how long immunity will last at this time, and in March/April 2021 we should have another 2-3 vaccines of single dose types also available. In the 4-5% chance you get the virus after being vaccinated, the hope is that your symptoms will be minimal compared to if you did not get vaccinated.

If multiple types of COVID-19 vaccines are available, will I have a choice as to which one I receive?

As soon as it's your turn to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, it's recommended to take whatever vaccine is available at the time, as they are considered equally effective. Not every vaccination location will have both types of vaccine. If more than one option is widely available, then you may be offered a choice. Just remember that both doses of the vaccine must be the same type i.e. Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna.

If I get the vaccine, can I stop wearing a mask?

NO. The Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective, so once you've received the full vaccine series (i.e. two shots) and your immune system has had an additional 7 days or more to respond, you're very likely to be protected from getting sick. It is unknown yet if those who are immune can still transmit the virus. Since no vaccine is 100% effective, we'll all need to continue wearing masks and maintaining physical distance from others well into 2021.

How much will the vaccine cost?

The federal government said it will cover the cost of vaccines, and intends to vaccinate everyone who requests it. The objective is to ensure that "no one desiring vaccination will face an economic barrier to receiving one."