

# What should I expect after I get a COVID-19 vaccine?



4/2021

You may have some mild to moderate side effects, for a few days. These are normal signs that your body is building protection. These side effects should go away in a few days. Some people have no side effects or may have different side effects after their 2nd dose than they did after their first shot. It is very rare to have severe or serious side effects after getting a vaccine.



## Common side effects

### On the arm where you got the shot:

- Pain
- Redness
- Swelling

### Throughout the rest of your body:

- Tiredness
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Chills
- Fever or feeling sweaty
- Nausea, or feeling sick to your stomach

Some COVID-19 vaccines need 2 shots in order to be fully protected from the virus. It's important to get both shots, even if you have side effects after the first shot. You should get both shots unless your doctor or the vaccination provider tells you not to.



It takes time for your body to build protection after any vaccination. **You are considered fully vaccinated or protected 2 weeks after you have your final dose.** You can still get sick with COVID-19 if you were exposed to the virus before you had the chance to get your final shot, or were exposed before your body developed full immunity. The vaccines don't interfere with test results. To keep others safe until more people are vaccinated, wear a mask when you are in public places or around a lot of people.

## Helpful tips

It's best to wait as long as you can to take any pain medicine after you get a vaccine. However, if you need to take medicine for pain or discomfort after getting your vaccine, talk to your doctor about taking an over-the-counter medicine, like ibuprofen or acetaminophen (often called Tylenol).

It's important to keep taking any long-term daily medications, unless your doctor tells you to stop taking it after your vaccination. It can be very dangerous to stop taking medications you take regularly.

### To reduce pain and discomfort where you got the shot:

- Apply a clean, cool, wet washcloth over the area.
- Use or exercise your arm.

### To reduce discomfort from fever:

- Drink plenty of water.
- Dress lightly, in clothes that won't make you hot.

## When to call a doctor

In most cases, side effects are normal. Call your doctor or healthcare provider:

- If the redness or tenderness where you got the shot starts to get worse after 24 hours (or 1 day).
- If you are worried about your side effects or they don't seem to be going away after a few days.
- If you received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and have any of these symptoms: severe headache, backache, new neurologic symptoms, severe abdominal pain, shortness of breath, leg swelling, petechiae (tiny red spots on the skin), or new or easy bruising.



## Ask your vaccination provider how to sign up with v-safe.

V-safe is an online tool that lets you tell the CDC if you get any side effects after getting the COVID-19 vaccine. You can also get reminders if you need a 2nd dose.



Learn more about v-safe at [www.cdc.gov/vsafe](http://www.cdc.gov/vsafe).