



Pennsylvania National Guard COVID-19 Vaccine Fact Sheet

FACT: COVID-19 vaccines will not give you COVID-19

None of the COVID-19 vaccines currently in development or in use in the United States, contain the live virus that causes COVID-19. There are several different types of vaccines in development. However, the goal for each of them is to teach our immune systems how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19. Sometimes this process can cause symptoms, such as fever. These symptoms are normal and are a sign that the body is building immunity. Learn more about how COVID-19 vaccines work. It typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination. That means it's possible a person could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and get sick. This is because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection.

FACT: COVID-19 vaccines will not cause you to test positive on COVID-19 viral tests

Neither the recently authorized and recommended vaccines nor the other COVID-19 vaccines currently in clinical trials in the United States cause you to test positive on viral tests, which are used to see if you have a current infection. If your body develops an immune response, which is the goal of vaccination, there is a possibility you may test positive on some antibody tests. Antibody tests indicate you had a previous infection and that you may have some level of protection against the virus. Experts are currently looking at how COVID-19 vaccination may affect antibody testing results.

FACT: People who have gotten sick with COVID-19 may still benefit from getting vaccinated

Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that re-infection with COVID-19 is possible, people may be advised to get a COVID-19 vaccine even if they have been sick with COVID-19 before. At this time, experts do not know how long someone is protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. The immunity someone gains from having an infection, called natural immunity, varies from person to person. Some early evidence suggests natural immunity may not last very long. We won't know how long immunity produced by vaccination lasts until we have a vaccine and more data on how well it works. Both natural immunity and vaccine-induced immunity are important aspects of COVID-19 that experts are trying to learn more about.

FACT: Getting vaccinated can help prevent getting sick with COVID-19

While many people with COVID-19 have only a mild illness, others may get a severe illness or they may even die. There is no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you, even if you are not at increased risk of severe complications. If you get sick, you also may spread the disease to friends, family, and others around you while you are sick. COVID-19 vaccination helps protect you by creating an antibody response without having to experience sickness. Learn more about how COVID-19 vaccines work.

FACT: Receiving an mRNA vaccine will not alter your DNA

mRNA stands for messenger ribonucleic acid and can most easily be described as instructions for how to make a protein or even just a piece of a protein. mRNA is not able to alter or modify a person's genetic makeup (DNA). The mRNA from a COVID-19 vaccine never enter the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA are kept. This means the mRNA does not affect or interact with our DNA in any way. Instead, COVID-19 vaccines that use mRNA work with the body's natural defenses to safely develop protection (immunity) to disease. Learn more about how COVID-19 mRNA vaccines work.

Questions & Answers

Q. Who will be the first to get the vaccine?

A. Vaccination distribution prioritization will focus on those providing direct medical care, maintaining essential national security and installation functions, deploying forces, and those at the highest risk for developing severe illness from COVID-19, before other members of the DoD population.

Q. How will DoD track personnel who receive a COVID vaccine?

A. DoD will track COVID vaccine administration through existing medical record reporting systems.

Q. Will DoD require all service members to receive the vaccine?

A. No. The vaccine will be offered on a voluntary basis. Priority populations are highly encouraged to receive the vaccine. When formally licensed by the FDA, the DoD may require a vaccine for military personnel or personnel in specific fields, as is the case for the influenza vaccine.

Q. What action did you take with regards to the Soldiers/Airmen who chose not to receive the vaccination?

A. In accordance with the Defense Health Agency guidance, we must report that a Soldier/Airman chose not to be vaccinated so that we keep proper records for the future when more vaccinations are available and when/if the Soldier/Airman chooses to be vaccinated at that time. We are capturing the refusals as required in the service specific medical systems of record with the "Medical Declination or MD code." Soldiers and Airmen will have the ability to change their mind and obtain vaccine when more readily available.

Q. If I already had COVID-19, should I still get a vaccine?

A. Yes, because duration of immunity following COVID-19 infection is unknown, and the vaccine may be effective in protecting previously infected people.

Q: How long will protection last following vaccination?

A. We do not know how long protection will last following vaccination but it will be critically important to measure long-term protection (at least two years) in the phase 3 trials and in other groups prioritized for early vaccination. We are still learning about the duration of protection following infection with COVID-19 and it is too early to tell how long protection will last.

Q. Why should we receive the first-available vaccine when there are several other vaccines still in trials?

A. People who are offered the first-available vaccine are considered to be in groups that are most in need of COVID-19 protection. Vaccinated people will be protecting themselves, as well as their families and all people with whom they interact. Evaluation of the first-available vaccine will continue, even after its pre-licensure release. The release of other vaccines cannot be fully predicted, so people who are offered the first-available vaccine will be encouraged to receive this vaccine.

Q. Will we still need to wear masks and practice physical distancing once a vaccine is available?

A. Yes. The intent of the vaccine is to prevent the spread of COVID 19. We will still need to wear cloth face coverings and practice physical distancing to limit the spread of the virus. Additionally, we will not have enough vaccine initially to vaccinate everyone who wants the vaccine and COVID-19 pandemic risks will continue. We will continue to recommend wearing masks and practicing physical distancing, for everyone, until pandemic risk of COVID-19 is substantially reduced.