



The availability of COVID-19 vaccines is accelerating in the US, with availability for everyone expected by May, and in some locations, doses are already being made available to all ages if local supplies allow.

For younger adults there may be questions you have about getting vaccinated, and you may be weighing the benefits against potential side effects or long-term concerns. This article is intended to provide information that will help you make the right decision for you.

First, let's look at some common objections you may have heard.

- **I'm young, and even if I get infected the chance I will be hospitalized, or die is extremely small.**
 - While the number of deaths in North Carolina is relatively low for those under 50 at 3.5% (1), you should think carefully about ignoring that small chance with a life-threatening disease.
 - Despite the low number of deaths, the number of hospitalizations, where severe symptoms are treated, for those between 18 and 29 is high at 17% (2) of all hospitalizations.
 - The hospitalization rate of those aged 18-49 is nearly the same as those 50-64.(3) In other words, just because you are younger doesn't mean you cannot have a serious case of COVID-19.
 - You should also be aware that nationally 34% (2) of all cases are in the under 30 age group, and fully 50% under 40, so the likelihood of contracting COVID-19 remains high in this age group, along with hospitalizations and ongoing symptoms.
- **I'm very healthy and strong, even if I do get COVID-19, I'll recover just fine.**
 - There is a growing body of evidence that younger, otherwise healthy people who contracted COVID-19, and only had mild symptoms, nonetheless have symptoms that linger for a long time, impacting their everyday life for weeks and months. These are called "long haulers".
 - Long haul symptoms include fatigue, body aches and pains, to the point that they cannot exercise daily, walk their dog or go up a flight of stairs without difficulty. Other symptoms people struggle with are brain fog, cognitive problems and continued loss of taste or smell.(4)
- **The vaccine was developed too quickly, and I don't trust it is safe.**

- In the past, vaccines have taken many years to develop because normally the development organization takes all the financial risk and they do not invest in the next development stage until the earlier stage shows positive results.
- However, the relatively quick development of this vaccine does not mean safety measures were skipped. In fact, the standard development steps were followed, but companies were willing to progress research without waiting for the final results of earlier steps.
- Some of the reasons why the COVID-19 vaccines were developed faster include:(5)
 - The COVID vaccines were all created by taking existing technology or existing methods of creating vaccines and re-purposing them to act against COVID-19, so we were not starting from scratch.
 - The Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines were created using synthetic messenger RNA (mRNA) technology which was first developed in 1990 and licensed to Moderna in 2010 and so a lot was already known about this technology.
 - The Johnson and Johnson vaccine uses an inactive adenovirus that causes the common cold to carry a gene from the coronavirus into human cells. This is the type of process used for other common vaccines and so it was relatively quick to re-purpose this known vaccine development method.
 - Genetic information about the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus was available early in the pandemic which gave vaccine developers an early start at finding a vaccine.
 - Because the COVID-19 was so contagious and many people understood the risk that it posed, it was possible to recruit the large number of volunteers required for the trials in a relatively short period of time.
 - Companies were able to begin manufacturing vaccines ahead of emergency authorization through Operation Warp Speed since the US Government agreed to assume the financial risk. This meant that vaccines would be ready immediately once authorization occurred.
- **I've already had the virus, so I'm safe.**
 - You should get vaccinated regardless of whether you already had COVID-19. How well you are protected through natural immunity is dependent on how strong your immune response was. Mild infections will produce less of an immune response than a severe infection.(6)
 - The COVID-19 vaccine will ensure your body's response from future infection is strong, and regardless of your natural immunity will boost your immune response should you become reinfected.

Now, let's look at the benefits of why you SHOULD get vaccinated against COVID-19

- Once fully vaccinated, you will be able to gather freely with other fully vaccinated people. And isn't that what we've all be hoping for? Make it a challenge to get vaccinated for yourself, family and close friends! (7)
- Even if other family members have not (yet) been vaccinated, current guidance indicates gathering with one other family unit without masks is also safe, as long as no one has risk factors that increase severity of COVID. The vaccine's protection is so high, it lowers the risk to where we can return to these types of gatherings.
- Really almost every activity is safer for you, which alone makes getting the vaccine the right choice. Even though you might still contract the disease and should wear a mask in public until we know more about whether vaccinated people can transmit COVID-19, becoming vaccinated is the most important step towards defeating COVID-19, including the new variants that continue to emerge.

- Speaking of defeating COVID-19 brings up herd immunity. Once we get to a large enough percentage of vaccinated people (70-90%) we can stop the spread of COVID-19 and the development of variants and get back to life. (8)

[Be part of the herd!](#)

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