COVID-19

What You Need to Know

What is COVID-19?

- COVID-19 is a highly contagious infectious disease. It is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.
- While most people who get COVID-19 have mild symptoms, some can get very sick.
- Between 2020-2024 in the U.S., COVID-19 caused over 1 million deaths and nearly 7 million hospitalizations.

Symptoms of COVID vary from person to person. They appear 2-14 days after exposure and can include flu and cold-like symptoms (fever, body aches, congestion, cough, and sore throat), loss of taste and smell, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and trouble breathing.

How can we prevent COVID-19?

The COVID-19 virus changes as it spreads, creating new variants. Each year, scientists update the vaccine to match current variants and provide the best protection. That's why getting an updated vaccine every year is important.

Four COVID-19 vaccines are available:

- Moderna's mRNA vaccine (**Spikevax**) can be given to anyone 6 months and older.
- Pfizer's mRNA vaccine (**Comirnaty**) can be given to anyone 5 years and older.
- Moderna's lower-dose mRNA vaccine (mNexspike) can be given to anyone 65 and older or those 12 and older with a high-risk underlying health condition.
- Novavax's protein-based vaccine (**Nuvaxovid**) can be given to anyone 12 years and older.

In Colorado, anyone 6 months and older can get a COVID-19 vaccine without a prescription.

What are the vaccine recommendations?

- **Babies 6 - 23 months** should get a COVID-19 vaccine and may need multiple doses. **Kids 2 - 18 years old** should also be vaccinated if they are immunocompromised or if their parent wishes.
- **All adults** should receive one (1) dose of an updated COVID-19 vaccine. This is especially important for those at increased risk for COVID,-19 including people 65 years and older.
- **People who are pregnant, may become pregnant, or are breastfeeding** should get one (1) dose of an updated COVID-19 vaccine.
- **People with weakened immune systems** may get additional doses of an updated COVID-19 vaccine if needed. The vaccine is safe and recommended for adults and children with weakened immune systems.

Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe?

- **Yes, COVID-19 vaccines are very safe.** Vaccines are continuously studied and monitored for safety, and the risk for an adverse reaction is very small. Choosing not to get vaccinated is more risky since it could lead to catching a potentially deadly disease.
- Like any medicine, vaccines can have side effects. Most side effects are mild and go away within a few days.
- Common side effects of COVID-19 vaccination include fever, headache, fatigue, body aches, chills, nausea, swollen lymph nodes, or pain where the shot was given.
- In rare cases, there have been reports of myocarditis and pericarditis (heart inflammation) after COVID-19 vaccination. There have been about 9 reported cases for every 1 million people vaccinated. You are 7 times more likely to develop heart inflammation from a COVID-19 infection than from vaccination.

What are the risks of COVID-19?

- Some risks of COVID-19 include:
  - **"Long COVID."** Long COVID is a term to describe long-term health effects that develop after COVID-19 infection. Long COVID can last for months or years.
  - **Heart inflammation** during or after COVID-19 infection.
  - **MIS-C**, a disease that can develop in children after COVID-19 infection, causing fever and other symptoms including heart problems.
- Older adults and people with chronic health conditions are at highest risk for complications from COVID-19. **However, anyone can experience severe COVID-19 symptoms and Long COVID – even healthy adults and young children.**

Questions about COVID-19 vaccines? Visit immunizecolorado.org/covid-19-vaccines or talk to your healthcare provider, pharmacist, or community health center.

Visit bit.ly/FindCOVaxProvider to find a vaccine provider near you!

Sources

- https://www.chop.edu/vaccine-education-center/vaccine-details/covid-19-vaccine#thedisease
- https://www.cdc.gov/covid/signs-symptoms/index.html
- https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/2026-2027-flu-covid19-rsv-vaccine-recommendations
- https://www.uchealth.org/today/everything-you-need-to-know-about-covid-19-vaccine-and-flu-shots/
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