

# Patient Education

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## **COVID-19 After You Have Been Vaccinated**

You must carefully read the "Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer" below in order to understand and correctly use this information

### **About this topic**

Coronavirus disease 2019 or COVID-19 is a virus that spreads easily from person to person. In 2020, there were a few kinds of vaccines developed to help prevent COVID-19. You are fully vaccinated when it has been more than 2 weeks since you were given the second dose of a 2-dose series of shots or more than 2 weeks since you were given a single dose vaccine. Until that time, it is important that you keep up with your normal safety measures.

When you are fully vaccinated, doctors now feel it is safe for:

- You to go back to your normal activities without wearing a mask or social distancing. You may still be required to wear a mask sometimes, based on local guidelines and the number of local COVID cases. If you are around others who are at a higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19, you should all still wear masks.
- You to travel. You do not need to be tested before or after travel. You also do not need to self-quarantine after travel. Where you are going may still have rules for testing.

If you have a weak immune system, you may not be fully protected from COVID-19, even if you are fully vaccinated. Continue to take all the precautions you would if you had not received a vaccine. This includes wearing a well-fitted mask over your nose and mouth and social distancing.

If you have been around someone with COVID-19, get tested 3 to 5 days after your exposure, even if you don't have symptoms. Wear a mask in public for 14 days or until you have a negative COVID-19 test.

### **General**

Many people want life to go back to normal after they have gotten a COVID-19 vaccine. Sadly, that is not the case.

### **Why do I still need to be careful if I have had all the doses of the vaccine?**

Your body takes time to build up immunity to the virus. This means you are not fully protected right after your first or second shot. Most of the time, it takes your body a week or 2 after the last dose to become protected.

New strains of the virus are found all the time. Doctors do not know for sure how a COVID vaccine will work against new strains. The vaccine you received may not work against the new strain. Also, doctors

don't know how long protection from a COVID-19 vaccine will last. You may need to get a booster in the future.

Vaccines work best when most of the people in a country have gotten them. Then the risk for getting the disease to the whole country goes down. All people are safer when you get a vaccine.

### **Can I spend time with my family and friends?**

Doctors feel it is safe to go back to indoor and outdoor activities. You are at a much lower risk of spreading COVID-19 after you have been fully vaccinated. You may want to wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an area where there are a lot of cases of COVID-19.

### **Do I need to quarantine if I am exposed to someone with COVID-19?**

You do not need to quarantine if:

- You are fully vaccinated **and**
- You have not had any symptoms of COVID-19 since you were exposed.

If you have not completed all the shots in your vaccine series, you should quarantine at home for 14 days. Also quarantine at home if you have symptoms of COVID-19.

If you are exposed to COVID-19, get tested 3 to 5 days after you are exposed. Watch for symptoms for 14 days, even if you are fully vaccinated. Wear a mask in public for 14 days or until you have a negative COVID-19 test.

### **Can I go out to eat, or to a concert, or sporting event?**

When you are fully vaccinated, doctors feel it is safe for you to:

- Go out to eat, either inside or outside.
- Go to crowded events like sporting events, church, or concerts.
- Exercise indoors or outdoors.
- Go to a movie theater.
- Gather with friends and family.

### **What about travel?**

Doctors feel it is safe for you to travel when you are fully vaccinated. In most cases, you do not need to quarantine or have a COVID-19 test before or after your travel. Some places may still want you to test before you travel. It is important to remember that new strains of the COVID-19 virus are developing all around the world. This means in some places there are more limits around travel and testing. If you travel, do your best to avoid crowds, wear a mask as recommended and wash your hands often.

### **What should I do if I am in an area where there are a lot of COVID-19 cases?**

You may want to wear a mask over your nose and mouth if you are in a crowded area or are around people who have not had a vaccine. Also, wash your hands often and practice social distancing.

## What should I do now?

Continue to help protect yourself and others.

- Wear a cloth face mask over your nose and mouth if you are required to by local guidelines.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you cough or sneeze. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60 percent alcohol if soap and water are not available. Rub your hands with the sanitizer for at least 20 seconds.

## Where can I learn more?

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/participate-in-activities.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>

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Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer:

This information is not specific medical advice and does not replace information you receive from your health care provider. This is only a brief summary of general information. It does NOT include all information about conditions, illnesses, injuries, tests, procedures, treatments, therapies, discharge instructions or life-style choices that may apply to you. You must talk with your health care provider for complete information about your health and treatment options. This information should not be used to decide whether or not to accept your health care provider's advice, instructions or recommendations. Only your health care provider has the knowledge and training to provide advice that is right for you.

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