COVID-19 After You Have Been Vaccinated

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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. It takes 2 weeks after your final dose of the vaccine before you are fully protected. Until that time, it is important that you keep up with your normal safety measures.

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. At that time, some of the guidelines you need to follow change. In public, it is still important to use safety measures. Wear a face mask. Avoid crowds and wash your hands often.

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

- Gather indoors with others who are also fully vaccinated without masks.
- Gather indoors with others who have not been vaccinated and are from 1 household. If anyone in that household is at a higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19, you should all still wear masks.
- Gather outdoors without wearing a mask. However, you may need to wear a mask if you are in a crowded setting or the place you are requires masks for everyone.
- Travel and you do not need to be tested before travel. After international travel, you may need to be tested. You also do not need to self-quarantine after travel. Your destination may still have requirements for testing. You may be required to wear a mask while on a plane, bus, train, or other transportation.

If you have been around someone with COVID-19, you do not need to be tested or stay away from others unless you have symptoms.

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 second dose to become protected.

New strains of the virus are discovered all the time. 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. Some people may still be able to spread the illness to others, even if they are not sick and have had the vaccine.

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, wear a mask, avoid crowds, and stay 6 feet apart.

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

It depends. Doctors feel it is safest to gather outdoors. However, you may gather indoors with other people who are also fully vaccinated without a mask. You can also gather with people from 1 household, even if they have not been vaccinated.

The risk level for meeting with others is based on things like:

- If you are meeting inside or outside.
- If others have had the vaccine or not.
- How long since others had the vaccine.
- If others have not had the vaccine but quarantined before you met.
- Wearing masks, social distancing, etc.

Just because you have had the vaccine for COVID-19, it is still important to protect yourself and others when in public. When indoors, wear a face mask over your mouth and nose and try to stay at least 6 feet (1.8 meters) away from others.

**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, watch for symptoms for 14 days, even if you are fully vaccinated. If you have any symptoms, talk with your doctor. They may want you to be tested.

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

Gathering or dining outdoors is the safest. Indoor restaurants and other places are still areas where COVID-19 can be passed easily from person to person. Some outdoor dining tents keep the air from
circulating and may be as high risk as indoor dining. You can’t wear a mask while you eat or drink. Many places may have poor air filtration. There are often crowds and loud talking at these places as well. Each of these things increases the risk of spreading this illness. Events that are outside with free air circulation and social distancing give you a better chance of staying safe. For crowded events, even outdoors, it is still important to wear a mask.

**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 must travel, do your best to avoid crowds, wear a mask at all times, and wash your hands often.

**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 indoors and around others.
- Practice social distancing and stay at least 6 feet (1.8 meters) away from others when in public. Wear a mask when you are in a crowded setting.
- Avoid meeting with people who have not had the vaccine from outside your household.
- 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.
- Avoid touching your face, especially your mouth, nose, and eyes.
- Wipe down objects and surfaces that you touch often with a disinfectant.

**Where can I learn more?**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention


Centers for Disease Control and Prevention


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