

Should I Get A COVID-19 Vaccine This Year: A Decision Aid

Almost everyone in the world has been infected with COVID-19 (COVID), and some have had it several times. It continues to spread in multiple waves each year. About half of people who catch the virus get mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. While many people will not get sick enough from COVID to go to the hospital, it is hard to tell who may. Your chances of being very sick or being hospitalized or even dying from COVID are higher if you are 65 years or older or have certain health problems. COVID may also cause some people to get long COVID, where you feel tired, short of breath, foggy, or other serious symptoms for weeks or months after you get sick.

COVID vaccines work well to lower your risk of severe COVID, being hospitalized or even dying from COVID, or having long COVID. They can help lower the chance that you catch COVID but you still may get a mild case. The vaccine dose may last up to a year before a new one is needed unless you are at higher risk but protection is strongest in the first 3-6 months. The dose is updated each year to match the type of COVID that is active.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) used to advise that everyone ages 6 months or older get at least 1 COVID vaccine dose a year, especially if you had a high risk health problem (see page 2). Two doses a year were recommended for people over age 65 or who are immunocompromised. In the fall of 2025, the CDC advisory committee recommended that COVID vaccination is now a decision for you to make by yourself with your healthcare professional, even if you are high-risk. The CDC did not give any tips on how to help you make this decision.

COVID-19 vaccines are safe. The vaccine has some common side effects, such as your arm feeling sore or being red, you feeling a bit ill, and some very rare side effects like having swollen heart muscle (myocarditis), an allergic reaction, or blood clots. Some of these side effects actually happen more often from getting COVID than from the vaccine.

Some may decide to get a COVID vaccine, some may not, and others may need help to decide if the vaccine is right for them or their family. We made this aid to help you to decide for yourself, and for talking with your healthcare professional about this decision.

The decision is yours, but we hope to give you the information to help you make the best decision for you! It may help to talk about your choices with family and friends. You can show them this aid to help with your decision. Please ask your healthcare professional about any questions or concerns. The best decision is the choice that you think keeps you healthy and makes you feel most at ease.

This decision aid is for you if:

- ✓ You are not sure you want to get the COVID vaccine this year
- ✓ You or a family member has been told that you are at high risk for severe COVID
- ✓ You are worried you could have a severe case of COVID, or pass it to a loved one
- ✓ You have had side effects from the COVID vaccine in the past, and wonder if it is worth trying again
- ✓ You had COVID-19 in the past even though you were vaccinated, and wonder if it is worth getting the vaccine



Comparing Your Choices About Getting a COVID Vaccine This Year

Why You May Want the COVID Vaccine This Year	Why You May Be Questioning the Need for a COVID Vaccine This Year
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You are 65 or older• You are pregnant or on a biologic drug• You have chronic lung disease or other high risk problem• You live or spend time with someone at high risk for severe COVID• You have had a bad case of COVID in the past• You have had long COVID or worry about long-term effects• You do not want to miss work or school or cause anyone else to• You work/go to school in an area at high risk for getting or spreading COVID	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You are young, healthy and not worried about COVID• You are not sure if the COVID vaccines will benefit you• You or the people you live or spend time with are not high risk for COVID• You think protection left over from past shots and infections will be enough• You worry about past or future side effects from the vaccine• You are concerned about the cost of getting the vaccine• You have not talked with a doctor about your COVID risk

High Risk Conditions for COVID-19

Cancer, stroke, kidney disease, liver disease, lung disease (including COPD and asthma), heart disease, cystic fibrosis, dementia, Parkinson's disease, diabetes, disabilities, HIV infection, mental health conditions, tuberculosis (TB), pregnancy, overweight, high blood pressure, immunocompromised, organ transplant, or a current or former smoker.

What may affect your decision?

Check all that apply and what you wish to discuss with your healthcare professional:

- Am I, my child, or other family members likely to get severe COVID? (see high risk conditions box)
- Am I, my child, or other family likely to get side-effects from the COVID vaccine?
- Am I, my child, or other family likely to still get severe COVID even if we get the vaccine?
- Am I, my child, or other family likely to give COVID to someone around us?
- Am I, my child, or other family likely to get long COVID?
- Will COVID become severe again if fewer people are getting the vaccine?
- Is the vaccine safe?

Let's work through the key steps involved in making this decision...

Step 1: What Are the Risks, Benefits, and Facts About COVID and COVID Vaccines

U.S. COVID-19 RATES IN THE LAST YEAR (2024-2025)

Between **13-20 million people** had COVID which caused:

About 4 million people to visit their doctor	As many as 540,000 people to be hospitalized	Between 44,000-63,000 people to die
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WHO IS AT RISK FOR SEVERE COVID?



People of all ages can get very sick

Your **risk of severe COVID increases** as number of underlying medical conditions increases

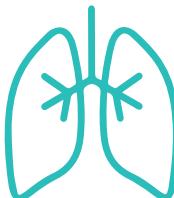
If you are age 65 and older or have a high risk condition, your chances of severe illness, hospital stay, or even death are higher

POTENTIAL COVID COMPLICATIONS

- Pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), lung failure
- Swelling of the heart muscle, heart failure, blood clots
- Swelling of the brain, stroke
- Acute kidney injury, pancreatitis
- Persistent loss of smell
- Long COVID
- A rare illness called multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C)
- Death

COVID RISKS FOR PEOPLE WITH ASTHMA

Unvaccinated people with asthma have over **5-9 times higher** odds of having possibly **severe asthma flares**



41% increased odds of having long COVID

COVID RISKS FOR PEOPLE WITH COPD

32% increased odds of having long COVID
39% higher odds of needing hospital stay
34% higher odds of needing ICU care
28% higher odds of death

COVID RISKS FOR PEOPLE WITH CANCER

19% higher odds of needing hospital stay
69% higher odds of needing ICU care
74% higher odds of death

COVID VACCINES ARE EFFECTIVE IN ADULTS



28% effective in preventing death
33% effective in preventing ER visits within 6 months of vaccination
50% effective in preventing hospital stays

For every 100 adults over age 65 who are hospitalized with COVID: 88 are not up to date on their COVID vaccine

COVID VACCINES ARE EFFECTIVE IN CHILDREN



In children ages 5-17 years old, after 3 doses, COVID-19 vaccines are:
65% effective in preventing hospital stays, ER and urgent care visits
60% effective in preventing long COVID

COVID VACCINES ARE EFFECTIVE IN PEOPLE WITH HIGH RISK

When vaccinated against COVID:

People with **asthma** have a
49% lower risk of severe symptoms
78% lower risk for ER visit or hospital stay
55% lower risk of death from COVID



People with **COPD** have a
54% lower risk of needing health care visit
76% lower risk for ER visit or hospital stay

People with **cancer** have a
50% lower risk for a hospital stay

[View citations at aafa.org/cite](https://aafa.org/cite)

Step 2: What about your next COVID vaccine is most important to you:

Check ✓ how much each reason matters to you on a scale from 0 to 5. '0' means it is **not** important, '5' means is **very** important

Things that are important to you:

How important is it to not get COVID?

How important is it to get a COVID vaccine each year if the choice is up to you?

How important is it to lower your risk of getting COVID, even just a bit?

How important is it to help protect others around you from COVID?

How important is it to avoid any side effects from a COVID vaccine, even if mild?

How important is it to not have long COVID?

Step 3: What Matters Most to Me

Think about your options for this year's COVID vaccine. What feels most right for you?

To help you decide, ask yourself:

Get a dose **Skip the dose**

Which choice do I feel is safest for me or my child?

Which choice is most convenient?

Which choice am I most comfortable with?

Now check in with yourself:

Yes

No

Do I know enough about the benefits and side effects of each option?

Am I clear about which benefits and risks matter most to me?

Do I have enough support and advice from others to make a choice?

Do I feel sure about the best choice for me?

Step 4: Now that you have thought about your choices, what would you like to do?

What are your goals for staying healthy this year?

What benefits do you think you would have if you get the COVID vaccine this year?

What risks are you willing to take if you do not get the COVID vaccine this year?

What risks are you willing to take if you did get the COVID vaccine this year?

How do you hope your life will change based on this decision?

My questions and concerns:

My decision: **Get Vaccinated** **Do not get vaccinated**