



## COVID-19 Vaccines

**The past 10 months have been challenging for everyone.** The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been far reaching and felt by all. From loss of loved ones, to being sick, to the economic effects, COVID-19 has impacted us in a way that will be felt for a long time. One of the best ways to begin to get the pandemic under control is through vaccination. As of January 2021, there are two FDA approved vaccines available in the US. Both of these vaccines require two doses. Many people have questions about the vaccine. Here we hope to provide some answers to commonly asked questions based on the information currently available.

**Can I get sick from the vaccine?** No. You cannot catch COVID-19 from the vaccine. This type of vaccine (a RNA vaccine) does not contain any part of the virus's DNA or its proteins that make it a live virus. Instead it "tricks" the cells into thinking it is a real virus. This causes the body to react and begin to produce antibodies, the things that keep us from being infected with the real virus.

**What about the side effects?** Some people have reported side effects from the vaccine. These are expected and will not last very long. In fact, some of the side effects mean that the vaccine is doing its job. Because your cells have been "tricked", they think they need to protect you from the virus. This causes the body to react in ways that can include a fever, inflammation in the injection site, fatigue, joint pain, and headaches. These usually resolve within 24 hours.

Developing a fever after a COVID-19 vaccine does not mean that you have been infected with the virus. Instead, it means that your body is reacting in the way that it is supposed to. For both vaccines, the chance of having side effects are higher after the second dose. These reactions are normal and mean that the vaccine is doing its job, creating antibodies that will protect you.

**What about allergic reactions to the vaccine?** Allergic reactions are very rare. However, there is a risk of allergic reaction with any vaccine. If you have a history of allergies or severe allergic reaction, you should talk with your doctor about your risks of allergic reaction weighed against the risks of contracting COVID-19.

**Does the vaccine actually work?** Many people feel unsure about how well the vaccine works because it was developed quickly. Large studies have been conducted that show that the vaccine is very effective in preventing infection and reducing the severity of infection among those who do become infected. This means that it will most likely keep you from getting sick, but it also will make it less likely that you will have severe complications if you do become sick. It is important to know that all of these studies relied on people getting BOTH doses of the vaccine. One dose may not be enough to fully protect you.

**Do I still need to wear a mask if I get the vaccine?** Yes. While the vaccine may prevent infection and serious complications from COVID-19 for the person receiving it, we don't yet know whether getting the vaccine will prevent the spread of the virus to other people. It is best to continue practicing all recommended safety precautions.

We are all in this together and the best way to stop the spread of the virus is to vaccinate everyone who can be vaccinated. If you have concerns, we encourage you to talk to your health care professional.

~H. Zuercher

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### Find more information at:

- Centers for Disease Control at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>
- Department of Public Health at <https://dph.georgia.gov/covid-vaccine>

## Mental Health Matters ~ Understanding Depression

The word "depression" is often used to describe feelings of sadness related to events that are commonly experienced. It is natural to feel sadness in response to things like the loss of loved ones, illness, loss of a job, and other life challenges. Sadness, however, is not the same as depression. Depression is a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, think and act. The symptoms can vary from mild to severe. For a diagnosis of depression, symptoms noticeably change how a person functions day-to-day and must last at least two weeks.

The good news is that depression is one of the most treatable mental health disorders. Depending on the severity and the factors that contribute to the depression, your doctor may recommend medication and/or therapy. Depression symptoms can also be reduced by self-care habits like getting enough sleep, eating healthy, reducing alcohol intake and increasing physical activity.

*Keep reading to learn more about risk factors, symptoms and resources.*

### ***Mental Health Matters continued***

**What are the risk factors for depression?** There are several factors that can play a role in depression. These factors don't **cause** depression, but have been shown to put individuals at higher risk for depression:

- Genetic Factors - depression can run in families
- Psychological factors - having low self-esteem, easily overwhelmed by stress, and being pessimistic (expecting the worst)
- Environmental factors - continuous exposure to violence, trauma, neglect, abuse or poverty
- Biological factors - differences in certain chemicals in the brain, changes in the body, medical conditions or medications

**How do I get help if I need it?** Start by talking to your doctor or other healthcare professional. You can also reach out to your local behavioral or mental health agency. If you don't know where to begin, there are two national hotlines where you can speak with someone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- ♦ National Helpline (800)662-HELP: A confidential, free information service that provides referrals to local resources (treatment facilities, support groups and community based organizations).
- ♦ National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800)273-8255: Available 24/7 to provide support to people in distress.

~T. Anderson

### **Symptoms of Depression**

- \* Feeling sad all or most of the time
- \* Losing interest in activities
- \* Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- \* Change in appetite
- \* Unintended weight loss or weight gain
- \* Feelings of hopelessness
- \* Feelings of worthlessness
- \* Low energy or fatigue
- \* Loss of motivation
- \* Agitated or struggling to concentrate
- \* Unexplained headaches, nausea, or muscle pain



*The 2021 theme for Black History Month is "The Black Family: Representation, Identity, and Diversity" as set forth by the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (asalh.org). At CFR, we understand the power, strengths, and resilience of Black families and we take pride in highlighting these attributes in our research. We are grateful for the opportunity to do this important work.*

### **CFR Research Corner:**

It is 2021 and we are looking forward to a busy year with lots of research activity:

- ⇒ **Currently:** Recruitment and data collection for the SleepSafe and PACT studies.
- ⇒ **Spring/Summer:** Resuming research visits for the SHAPE, FACHS, AMP and ProSAAF studies.
- ⇒ **Fall:** Launching two new studies involving more than 500 participants.

To support our current and future recruitment efforts, we are inviting those who might be interested in participating to contact us. Please share. ➡

Follow and Like us on Facebook: **The Center for Family Research at UGA**  
Visit our website: [www.cfr.uga.edu](http://www.cfr.uga.edu).

An advertisement for the Center for Family Research (CFR) at the University of Georgia. It features a collage of images: a woman and child smiling, a man and child playing, and a man smiling. A red banner in the top left corner says 'Receive up to \$400'. The text 'MAKE A DIFFERENCE!' is prominently displayed in the center. Below the images is a QR code with the text 'SCAN HERE' underneath it. To the right of the QR code, there is a red banner that says 'Interested in participating? Please provide your information by:'. Below this banner are three options: 'GO TO: cfr.uga.edu/interest-form', 'CALL OLIVE: 706-255-9589', and 'or VERA: 706-201-5771'. At the bottom, a black banner says 'To find out more about our research projects visit: [www.cfr.uga.edu](http://www.cfr.uga.edu)'.

At the UGA Center for Family Research, our mission is to learn what makes African American individuals and families strong.

Then, we use our findings to develop community-based programs for better health and well-being. Your participation helps us to make positive change!