**COVID-19 Vaccine Information in Plain Language**

**What is COVID-19?**

It is a short way of saying Coronavirus Disease 2019. COVID-19 is an infection caused by the coronavirus. It is a terrible virus making people sick all around the world. Getting this virus is bad for you.

COVID-19 often spreads by airborne transmission by an infected person coughing, sneezing and even talking to another person.

Wearing a mask and physical distancing are important to keep safe.

COVID-19 also spreads by touch. Washing / sanitizing your hands often is also important.

Some people might have the virus and not know it, but can still spread it to others.

Common symptoms of COVID-19 are coughing, having trouble breathing, a fever, chills, tiredness, and losing your sense of taste or smell.

Some people with COVID get very sick and can die, some people get a little bit sick and some people may not feel sick at all.

**What is a vaccine?**

A vaccine is medicine. Scientists have made vaccines to protect you and other people from getting from viruses, like the Coronavirus. The vaccine will make your body stronger to fight COVID. Doctors and scientists think less people will get sick with COVID if more people have the vaccine. It usually comes in a shot. It protects you from getting sick. Each vaccine protects you from one illness. For example, the flu vaccine protects you from getting the flu. It does not protect you from getting a cold. The government works hard to make sure vaccines are safe. You have probably had many vaccines in your life. Most of them are given when someone is a baby. Getting a vaccine is good for you.

**How does the vaccine work?**

The vaccine helps your body make antibodies so its ready to fight the virus. This can reduce your risk of developing COVID-19 and make your symptoms milder if you do get it.

**Is the COVID-19 shot safe?**

Yes, the vaccine is safe. Doctors and scientists have done lots of work to make sure it is safe to use. The shot was tested with many thousands of people to make sure it is safe. These people were different ages and races and they had different health problems. Most people did not have any serious reactions to the vaccine.

**What to Know About The COVID-19 Vaccine?**

Many COVID-19 vaccines are being made. Most require you to get 2 shots. You get the second shot 3 to 4 weeks after you got the first one. The second shot is like a booster shot. It is important for you to get both shots for the vaccine to work. The vaccine is free.

It takes time to make enough vaccine for everybody. Your state decides when you can get the vaccine. Doctors and nurses will get the vaccine first. Then elders and people with certain health problems like diabetes or heart disease will get the vaccine. Ask your doctor if you have questions about when it will be your turn to get the vaccine. You get the vaccine at the places where you get a flu shot.

Talk to your doctor about what will happen when you get the COVID-19 vaccine.

**Why should I get vaccinated for COVID-19?**

COVID-19 can cause serious illness or even death. There is no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you. And if you get sick, you could spread the disease to friends, family, and others around you. All COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States have been shown to be highly effective at preventing COVID-19 disease. Even if you still get infected after you get vaccinated, the vaccine may prevent serious illness.

**How will I feel if I get the shot?**

You get the shot in your arm with a needle. It is quick and easy. Your arm might be a little red or hurt after you get the shot. You might get a fever, feel tired, have a headache, or have aches and pains. This is normal and will last a day or two. It is a lot like what you might feel after a flu shot.

Always get your second shot even if you had side effects. You need both shots for the vaccine to work.

**Why do I need two COVID-19 shots?**

Some COVID-19 vaccines need two shots. The first shot gets your body ready. If you are told you need two shots, make sure that you get your second shot at the time you are told, to make sure you have full protection.

**Will I need to wear a mask after I get a vaccine shot?** YES! While experts learn more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide under real life conditions, it will be important for everyone to continue using all the tools available to us to help stop this pandemic, like wearing a mask over your nose and mouth, washing your hands often, and staying at least 6 feet away from people who don’t live with you. It takes time for the vaccine to build up in your body. It might take 2 months until the vaccine protects you from getting sick. Doctors will tell us when it is safe to be in public without a mask.

**Who should get the COVID-19 shot?**

Everyone should get the shot. People with disabilities are at higher risk for getting sick from COVID-19. It is important that all people with disabilities, their families, and their support staff get the COVID-19 shot so everyone is protected.

The people who are more likely to get COVID-19 include: people of color, elders, and people with certain health problems like diabetes or heart disease. Your state has a plan to make sure these groups of people get the vaccine as soon as possible.

**There are some people who should not get the vaccine:**

If you are less than 16 years old.

If you have any COVID-19 symptoms, you should not get the vaccine right now.

If you have had any other vaccines, you need to wait 2 weeks before getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

If you have a weakened immune system (if you have immunosuppression).

If you are allergic to any of the things used to make this vaccine.

If you aren’t sure if you can get this vaccine, you need to talk to your doctor.

**I take some medications. Does the vaccine mix up with my medications and make them work less well?**

Most people who take different medications don’t need to worry about how their medications mix with the vaccine. This is a good question to ask your doctor.

**Why is the COVID-19 vaccine important for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities?**

● Many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities live in group homes and attend day programs where they are around many other people. This means that they are more likely to be in contact with someone who has COVID-19.

● Some people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who get COVID-19 get sicker than people that get COVID-19 who do not have intellectual and developmental disabilities. This is because people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are more likely to have illnesses that make it hard for their body to fight the disease.

● People with intellectual and developmental disabilities who get COVID-19 die from COVID-19 more often than people that get COVID-19 who do not have intellectual and developmental disabilities.

**When should I get the COVID-19 shot?**You should get a shot as soon as it is available to you.

The COVID-19 vaccine will not be available to everyone right away. There are many people who need and want the vaccine, but it will take time to make it and give it to everyone.

**Should I get the shot if I already had COVID-19?**Talk to your doctor about this. People who have had the virus can get sick again. Experts are still learning about the virus and the shot. Although you may have some short-term natural protection (known as immunity) after recovering from COVID-19, we don’t know how long this protection will last. Vaccination is the best protection, and it is safe. People who get COVID-19 can have serious illnesses, and some have terrible symptoms that continue for months. If you have had COVID-19, ask your doctor, nurse, or clinic when you should be vaccinated. Your doctor should know the newest information.

● Experts are deciding who should get the COVID-19 vaccine first.

● We want people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and direct support professionals to be some of the first people to get the COVID-19 vaccine.

**Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?**No, the vaccine does not cause COVID-19. None of the approved COVID-19 vaccines contain thevirus that causes COVID-19. It does take a few weeks after vaccination for your body to build upantibodies to protect you from the virus. That means it’s possible you could be infected withthe virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after getting the vaccine and still get sick.

**Do I have to pay for the vaccine?**

No. The federal government is providing the vaccine free of charge to all people living in the United States.

Call the Disability Rights office in your state if you think your rights are being violated in getting your COVID-19 vaccine.