

# COVID-19 Vaccine Questions?

Beebe infectious disease expert breaks down what you need to know

BY DR. BILL CHASANOV

AS THE COVID-19 VACCINE rollout continues and expands to many more Delawareans this spring and summer, you may have questions if a COVID vaccine is right for you.

Perhaps you decided to not worry about it until it was closer to your phase, or as a business owner, it's difficult to navigate all of the information with multiple vaccines and more in development.

Side effects, two doses, upcoming vaccine manufacturers, herd immunity, allergies, public clinics, private clinics – the list of questions continues.

No matter where we are in the coming months, keep these resources and tips in mind.

## Masks will still be vital

Not to burst anyone's bubble, but plan to still need face coverings in public at least through summer and possibly longer. It will be critical to maintain this safety measure while we attempt to obtain herd immunity.

Even if you have been vaccinated, it is important to understand that the three Ws will still be necessary: Wear your mask, Wash your hands, and Watch your distance.

Why? While the Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson vaccines protect you from serious illness with an efficacy of more than 90%, more data and studies are needed to understand how likely it is that a vaccinated person who becomes infected can pass the virus onto another person.

## The vaccine is safe and side effects are mild

By now, thousands of Americans and Delawareans have been safely vaccinated. Vaccine hesitancy is understandable but knowing that hundreds of thousands of people have been vaccinated should give you greater confidence.



The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines use a technology involving messenger RNA (mRNA). mRNA is the blueprint that our bodies use to create proteins. The protein created by these vaccines will in turn cause the body's immune system to form antibodies (special proteins created by the body to fight off infection) against the COVID-19 virus. The mRNA cannot integrate into DNA and mRNA is dissolved quickly by our bodies. Because of the use of mRNA, the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines do not use live virus. This technology is fascinating and could be a game changer for vaccines and therapies for other diseases moving forward.

It is important to know that fast does not mean unsafe. The vaccine development process has not skipped steps. The shorter development time is the result of massive, worldwide resources used to map the virus's genome and use multiple technology and pharmaceutical to develop the needed vaccines.

The clinical trial process was accelerated by enrolling more people in trials to enhance rapid data collection and earlier analysis of safety data for demographically diverse populations throughout the world.

So far, we've seen the most common side effects be very mild:

- redness at the injection site
- swelling or pain at the injection site
- fatigue
- headache
- muscle pain

You should consult your physician before receiving the vaccine if you:

- have any allergies
- have a fever
- have a bleeding disorder or are on a blood thinner
- are immunocompromised or are on medicine that affects your immune system
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant
- are breastfeeding

### Understanding the complexity of herd immunity

Herd immunity is a situation in which a sufficient proportion of a population is immune to an infectious disease (through vaccination and/or prior illness) to make its spread from person to person unlikely, according to the CDC. Even individuals not vaccinated (such as newborns and those with chronic illnesses) are offered some protection because the disease has little opportunity to spread to them as most members in the community have immunity.

However, experts predict that 60-80 percent of the population would need to have immunity to reach the point of herd immunity, which makes the timeline fluid as the vaccine rollout continues.

### Your go-to resources as things rapidly evolve

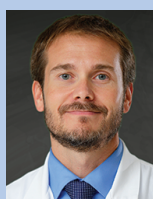
Things are changing daily and that's not to be unexpected during these unprecedented times. The key to cutting through misinformation is to know

where to find trustworthy resources and a little patience.

If you are looking for information on your responsibility as a business owner to get your team members vaccinated, the [de.gov/covidvaccine](https://www.de.gov/covidvaccine) website is going to be your best resource for timely information.

Beebe has also created a vaccine information page at: [beebehealthcare.org/covid-19-vaccine](https://www.beebehealthcare.org/covid-19-vaccine). We will be updating this page frequently as phases change to guide the entire community to find information on how to get vaccinated.

We're all in this together and the horizon looks bright this summer if we can all do our part to stop COVID-19 with safety measures and a vaccine. ■



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