

Talking about the COVID-19 vaccines

With concerned friends and family



Dear community members,

It takes a village. From the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have asked residents, businesses, community partners, and visitors to our region to *mask up, wash up, and maintain a 6-foot social distance* to slow the spread of the virus and keep our communities safe. Now with another tool to fight the virus, the COVID-19 vaccines, we are again asking our residents, businesses, community partners, and visitors to do their part and get the shot!

We all play a role in reaching the health department's goal of vaccinating at least 70% of our population over the age of 16! Many of us may know someone who is concerned or hesitant about the COVID-19 vaccines.

What you should do:

- **Talk about your experience.** You are someone they know and trust, and they may feel comfortable asking you questions and voicing their concerns. Share your personal reason(s) for getting vaccinated.
- **Stress the importance of vaccination.** Share that getting vaccinated might save their life or the life of a loved one.
- **Explain this is another tool and way out of restrictions, masks, quarantines.** It will also increase their freedom so they can gather with close friends and family, go to work, school, and be out and about.
- **Ask what specific concerns they have and respect their concerns.** Don't assume you know why they don't want it. Perhaps suggest they share their concerns with their healthcare provider.
- **Continue to have the conversation in the future, sharing the facts gently and referring to trusted and reputable sources.** Some sources include MDHHS, the CDC, and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Discuss only what you know. If they ask questions and voice concerns you are unsure of - especially medical, research, and development concerns - recommend they discuss these issues with their primary care provider. **For anyone without a primary care provider**, or anyone wanting COVID-19 vaccine concerns addressed, Munson Healthcare operates an Ask-a-Nurse phone line staffed daily from 7 a.m. - 11 p.m. to answer any healthcare questions you may have. Access this resource by calling 231-935-0951. The MDHHS COVID Hotline is also available at 888-535-6136 for questions.

For those who are ready, vaccine clinic dates and locations can be found by visiting **www.nwhealth.org**. Anyone with a barrier to using a computer or the internet or needing assistance such as transportation, can call 2-1-1 or their local Commission on Aging or Senior Services Center. The vaccine is free and individuals can schedule their own appointment to fit their schedule. Many clinics also allow walk-ins.

COVID-19 Vaccines

Frequently Asked Questions



How does the COVID-19 vaccine work?

- The COVID-19 vaccine works similarly to other vaccines. Germs such as SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, invade and multiply inside the body. The vaccine stops this by helping the immune system make special proteins called antibodies to fight the virus. After vaccination, you have less of a chance of getting COVID-19. And, if you do get infected with the virus, you may not be as sick as you would without the vaccine.

Does the vaccine affect fertility?

- There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 vaccination causes any problems with pregnancy, including the development of the placenta. In addition, there is no evidence that fertility problems are a side effect of any vaccine, including COVID-19 vaccines.

How effective are the vaccines?

- Research shows that all of the COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective at stopping people from getting COVID-19. It also helps prevent serious illness, hospitalization, and death in those who get COVID-19. Scientists don't know how long immunity from the vaccine will protect people. This will become clearer in the future.

How long does it take for the vaccines to create immunity?

- It takes around 2 weeks after getting the second dose of the mRNA vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna) for your body to build up an immunity to the virus that causes COVID-19. For the single-dose vaccine, building up immunity takes 2 to 4 weeks.

How can I be sure the long-term side effects of the vaccine won't be worse than having COVID-19?

- Serious adverse effects from all vaccines are very rare and generally apparent within 2 months of administration. The threat of COVID-19 is real and urgent, and the benefits of getting vaccinated far outweigh the risks. Getting immunized will help keep you, your family, and your community healthy and safe and will allow for the full reopening of the economy. Surveillance for even extremely rare effects from the vaccine are ongoing and will continue to assure that they are safe and effective.

What is herd or community immunity, and is it a viable strategy to combat COVID-19?

- Community immunity is achieved when a virus stops circulating because a large segment of the population has already been infected or has been vaccinated against the virus. It is estimated that 70-85% of the population will need to be vaccinated before community immunity is achieved. Until then, getting vaccinated and wearing a mask, watching your distance, and washing your hands are the best tools we have to stop the spread.

Why should I trust the vaccine is safe when it was developed so quickly?

- The FDA approves a vaccine for use only if it is proven safe and effective, after clinical trials have been conducted with thousands of people, and only when its benefits outweigh any risks. Every study and every phase of every trial was carefully reviewed and approved by a safety board and the FDA. Additional steps were also taken to shorten the timeline without "cutting corners" or sacrificing safety.