



Vaccination Hesitancy



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Openness to the vaccine is rising, with 74% of Americans reporting that they're willing to get a COVID-19 vaccine or that they've already received one, according to a Gallup poll published on March 30. That number is up from 65% from December. However, there is still vaccine hesitancy.

These are new vaccines and that comes with a reaction and a fear that is very real. There is massive misinformation out there which also contributes to the hesitancy. Covid-19 vaccines cannot give someone COVID-19 as the mRNA vaccines do not use the live virus that causes COVID-19. They do not affect or interact with our DNA in any way, mRNA never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA (genetic material) is kept.

Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is a personal choice, however, this choice has social consequences. To support communities as they make the decision, here are 12 facts and insights (shared by Sherita Golden, M.D., M.H.S., Chief Diversity Officer at Johns Hopkins Medicine) that can be helpful:

- 1. Getting the COVID-19 vaccine can protect you from getting sick.**
- 2. People of color are especially vulnerable to severe COVID-19. Getting vaccinated can provide protection.**
- 3. Getting vaccinated helps others in your community. The more people who receive the coronavirus vaccines, the sooner vulnerable people can feel safe among others.**
- 4. More vaccinations mean a chance to return to normal.**
- 5. Though the COVID-19 vaccine development was fast, it did not skip steps.**
- 6. Diversity in COVID-19 vaccine testing helped assess safety and effectiveness.**
- 7. Side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine are temporary and do not mean you're sick. After the shots, you might experience a sore arm, a mild fever or body aches, but this doesn't mean you have COVID-19. These symptoms, if they happen at all, are temporary, usually lasting only a day or two. They signal a natural response as your body's immune system learns to recognize and fight the coronavirus.**



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- 8. If you have allergies, you may be able to get the COVID-19 vaccine. If you have ever had a severe allergic reaction to a vaccine, be sure to discuss that with your doctor, who can evaluate you and assess your risk. However, if you are severely allergic to any of the coronavirus vaccines' ingredients, you should not be vaccinated.**
- 9. Pregnant women should discuss a COVID-19 vaccine with their doctors. Although the vaccines have not yet been tested in pregnant women, getting COVID-19 while pregnant can be dangerous, so your doctor can help you decide if the vaccines are appropriate for you. The vaccines are safe for breastfeeding mothers, and do not harm a woman's ability to become pregnant.**
- 10. If you've already had COVID-19, getting the vaccine will add extra protection. Current guidelines suggest that anyone previously infected with COVID-19 should be vaccinated. Some people who have been vaccinated after having COVID-19 have observed a strong immune reaction after the first of the two shots with the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines.**
- 11. Time is of the essence. Vaccine hesitancy can affect people of all different backgrounds, ages and ethnicities. Some people are deciding not to get the coronavirus vaccines until more people have had them. But waiting too long to be vaccinated allows the coronavirus to continue spreading in the community, with new variants emerging. Severe COVID-19 can be very dangerous: The sooner you get vaccinated, the sooner you are protected.**
- 12. Vaccines can't save lives unless people get vaccinated. By themselves, the COVID-19 vaccines cannot shorten the pandemic. They can only work when communities agree to receive them. And, even if you are vaccinated, you should continue to wear a mask, wash your hands and practice social distancing until the pandemic is over.**

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