



## Vaccine Facts for Muslim Faith Communities

**Do COVID-19 vaccines contain fetal tissue?** The two vaccines that were first available in the U.S. — **Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna** — are not produced using fetal cells. No fetal cells are used to make them, which means that there are no fetal cells in the injection you receive.

Viruses need living cells to grow. Researchers have developed “cell lines” of living cells that reproduce themselves indefinitely in the laboratory, and they are used to grow viruses. Early in the development of these COVID-19 vaccines, a **fetal cell line** was used to test that the active ingredient, messenger RNA, worked as intended. The tests showed that messenger RNA, when introduced into human cells, produces the viral protein that makes us develop immunity against the virus that causes COVID-19.

The **Johnson & Johnson** vaccine uses a virus (“Adenovirus 26”) that cannot reproduce itself. When this virus is introduced into human cells, they produce the same viral protein as the other vaccines, which makes us develop immunity to COVID-19. Producing this vaccine virus does require the use of a fetal cell line, specifically PER.C6.

**What is a fetal cell line?** Fetal cell lines are grown in laboratories from cells originally taken from fetal tissue. They can be grown indefinitely. COVID-19 vaccine developers have used two historic fetal cell lines when testing or manufacturing vaccines:

- HEK-293 — A kidney cell line that was isolated from a fetus around 1972
- PER.C6 — A retinal cell line that was isolated from a terminated fetus in 1985

Producing vaccines that rely on these cell lines do not require new abortions, because the cells reproduce themselves indefinitely in the laboratory.

This [chart](#) lists the COVID-19 vaccines in development and whether and how they use these fetal cell lines. [tinyurl.com/420cndxg](https://tinyurl.com/420cndxg)

**Do COVID-19 vaccines contain animal products?** The Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines in the U.S. do not contain any ingredients that come from animals. There are no pig or cow products in these vaccines. They contain messenger RNA, water, sugar, salts and lipids (fats) that are not derived from animals.

### What do faith leaders say about the ethics of receiving a vaccine?

The **National Muslim Task Force on COVID-19** and the **National Black Muslim COVID Coalition** made a [joint statement](#) based on consultation with religious leaders and public health experts:

“The Taskforce and Coalition recommend individuals obtain the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines after discussing with your physician or healthcare provider and in-line with your local public health guidance.” [tinyurl.com/1sfla4es](https://tinyurl.com/1sfla4es)

## Frequently asked questions

**Is the vaccine safe?** Yes. The Food & Drug Administration (FDA) requires rigorous safety testing before it will approve any vaccine. Tens of thousands of people — including Oregonians — from many backgrounds, ages and communities of color, participated in vaccine testing. These studies were done to make sure the vaccines meet safety standards and protect people of different ages, races and ethnicities.

**Is it safe to get a COVID-19 vaccine if I have an underlying medical condition?** Yes. COVID-19 vaccination is especially important for people with underlying medical conditions like heart disease, lung disease, diabetes and obesity. People with these conditions are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19. People with these medical conditions were also part of vaccine research.

**What about side effects?** According to the FDA, the most common side effects in the COVID-19 vaccine trials included pain, redness or swelling at the injection site, fatigue, headache, chills, muscle pain and joint pain.

These reactions mean the vaccine is working to help teach your body how to fight COVID-19 if you are exposed. For most people, these side effects will last no longer than a few days. If you have any concerns, call your doctor or nurse.

**Is the vaccine safe in pregnancy or breastfeeding?** Although the vaccines have not yet been studied in pregnant women, they do not contain live viruses, and experts believe that they are likely to be safe in pregnancy for both mother and baby. Moreover, pregnant women tend to get more serious illness from COVID-19 than do women who aren't pregnant, and they are more likely to be hospitalized and to need intensive care. For these reasons, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that COVID-19 vaccines be offered to pregnant women. Similarly, although there are no data on COVID-19 vaccines in lactating women, they are not thought to be a risk to breastfeeding infants, so lactating women may choose to be vaccinated.

If you have additional questions about getting vaccinated, it's good to discuss them with your healthcare provider.

Learn more about pregnancy and COVID-19 vaccines [here](https://tinyurl.com/ytofd9an). [tinyurl.com/ytofd9an](https://tinyurl.com/ytofd9an)

**Is there a microchip in the vaccine so the government can track me?** COVID-19 vaccines don't contain a microchip to track people. Vaccine shipping boxes are tracked, as any other shipment, to make sure they're distributed where needed and to prevent theft. There is also a record of where you got your vaccine to make sure you get all your doses.

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