

What can you do once you're vaccinated?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently issued [new guidelines](#), and other [experts have weighed](#) in with their thoughts.

But when it comes to what you personally should or shouldn't do, you will need to do your own risk assessment. Here is a post-vaccination decision-making guide to help you navigate this next stage of the pandemic.

What are you doing?

1. Is it indoors
2. Will you be there for more than one hour?
3. Will the activity be high intensity or involve shouting?

How long an activity is and how ventilated the space will be play the biggest roles in safety. Even if you don't know the ventilation system used in an indoor space, you can see if there's an attempt to increase it, such as opening doors and windows.

Public health officials use 15 minutes as the threshold of exposure to determine if someone is at risk for infection. One hour represents a moderately high risk.

Whom will you be with?

1. Will there be more than 10 people there?
2. Will you be around many people you don't know?
3. Is everyone there vaccinated?
4. Are they following health guidelines?

Such as wearing masks and social distancing.

New C.D.C [data](#) suggests that the authorized Covid-19 vaccines reduce the risk of getting and spreading the coronavirus. There is still a small chance after vaccination that you can get the virus and spread it.

Who is in your circle?

1. Are there kids in your circle?
2. Are any adults in your household or circle unvaccinated?
3. Are any people in your household or circle immune-compromised, or unvaccinated and high risk?

Young children cannot receive the vaccines yet, but they also are less likely to require hospitalization or die from Covid-19, unless they have an underlying condition or are high risk. They can still spread the virus, though. People with immune-compromising conditions (like cancer, H.I.V., organ transplants, etc.) can receive the vaccines, but scientists don't yet know how well the vaccines protect them.

Where do you live or where will you be?

The transmission rates where you live and where you're headed are helpful data points, though not the whole story. Other people may be traveling from areas with different rates, and transmission and test positivity rates more broadly depend on testing availability and frequency. Regardless, knowing the rates offers a rough benchmark for thinking about the infection risk within the community.

Your own health

1. Do you have underlying health risks for Covid-19?
2. If you get sick, can you afford to stop working and isolate?
3. Will you have access to sick leave, testing and essential supplies if you get sick?

All the vaccines authorized by the F.D.A. have been found to fully protect you from death from Covid-19, and they nearly completely protect you from severe disease and hospitalization. Still, the risk of infection is not zero.

How comfortable are you with the risk in these five areas?

You have to weigh this knowledge against your own personal tolerance for risk. Are you a big risk taker or more conservative?

Only you can determine this risk-benefit calculation: Is a given activity worth the levels of risk based on the questions above? Are the risks primarily to you, or do they extend to others you care about? Some people may find that the activity is generally low risk, but having just one high-risk, unvaccinated person in their circle might dissuade them from participating. Is this a once-in-a-lifetime experience? Some events, like weddings, for example, will never happen again. Others, like travel to a foreign country, are easier to delay.

As has been the case since the pandemic began, be prepared to change your plans if the situation or science changes. As time goes on, for example, researchers will learn more about how long immunity from the vaccines last, and how effective the vaccines are against new variants that arise. In the meantime, as you come to understand the biggest factors that make any situation more or less safe, as well as your own personal risk threshold, post-vaccination decision making becomes easier — and life more enjoyable.

NY Times Tara Haelle March 30, 2021