12 Common Questions about the COVID-19 Vaccine

This flyer provides the answers to commonly asked vaccine questions. If you have questions specific to your health and the vaccine, talk to your primary care provider and visit the Department of Health website for updated information: hawaiicovid19.com/vaccine.

The COVID-19 vaccine protects you from severe illness. It also protects your family, friends and our community from increases in cases that then, strain our healthcare system.

With or without the vaccine – always wear your mask, wash your hands and practice physical distancing.

#1. Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?
Yes. COVID-19 vaccines have gone through the same rigorous safety assessment as all vaccines in the U.S. The two vaccines available in Hawaii were tested in clinical trials with thousands of volunteers across the U.S. and were found to be safe and effective. The vaccine safety being monitored by the CDC.

#2. Can you get COVID-19 by getting vaccinated?
No. It does not contain a live virus and the vaccine cannot give you COVID-19. The technology used to make the vaccine is new, but has been found to be successful in making vaccine for diseases.

#3. Is the COVID-19 vaccine effective?
Yes. The vaccine is very effective and will build your body’s ability to fight the COVID-19 virus. If you do get COVID-19, you will probably get a milder case and have fewer symptoms.

#4. Will this vaccine change my DNA? How do vaccines work?
No. This vaccine will not change your DNA. The COVID-19 vaccine was created using science that will not change your DNA. This vaccine trains your body to recognize and attack the COVID-19 virus.

#5. Are there side effects to the COVID-19 vaccine?
Maybe. The most common are pain and swelling in the arm where you got the shot. You may also experience fever, chills, tiredness or headache which may last for a few days. These side effects are more common after the second dose and are a sign that your immune system is working.

#6. Do I have to get the second shot?
Yes. Both vaccines require two doses to build the immunity your body needs to fight COVID-19. You have to get the same brand vaccine for the second shot. The Pfizer vaccine requires at least 21 days between shots. The Moderna vaccine requires at least 28 days between shots.
#7. Is one brand better than the other?
No. Both vaccines have proven to be safe and effective. Due to the national vaccine shortage, it is recommended that you receive the vaccine as soon as you are eligible to register for an appointment. It is unlikely that you will know ahead of time which brand of the vaccine will be available at your appointment.

#8. If I have medical conditions, can I still get the vaccine?
Maybe. The clinical trials included people who had various medical conditions of all ages and of many ethnic backgrounds. These vaccines have been approved as safe and effective for most people. If you have a medical condition, talk to your provider about your specific situation and if the vaccine is right for you.

#9. Can people with bad allergies get the vaccine?
Maybe. If you have a history of severe allergic reaction to food, medicines or chemicals, please talk to your provider to see how you can receive the vaccine. Large distribution sites will screen all patients prior to vaccination and depending on your specific situation, you may or may not be able to receive the vaccine. All of the mass vaccination sites have EMS on-site to provide immediate treatment, should it be needed.

#10. Can children get the vaccine?
No. The Pfizer vaccine is approved for individuals 16 years or older. The Moderna vaccine is approved for individuals 18 years or older. The vaccine manufactures are testing the safety and effectiveness for children right now. At this time children must be 16 years of age or older to get the Pfizer vaccine and 18 or older to get the Moderna vaccine.

#11. Can I get the vaccine if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?
Yes. Both vaccines are being offered to pregnant and breastfeeding women, although they were not included in the clinical trials. Studies are underway to determine safety. Pregnant people with COVID-19 are at an increased risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes, such as preterm birth. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, talk to your provider about receiving the vaccine.

#12. Do I need the vaccine if I had COVID-19?
Yes. You should get the vaccine even if you were COVID-19 positive in the past. Reinfection with COVID-19 is possible. If you were treated with antibodies or convalescent plasma, you must wait 90 days before getting the COVID-19 vaccine. Talk to your doctor about your specific situation.