

10 Quick FAQs on the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine

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The Suquamish Tribe is providing the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to help protect its citizens from COVID-19. The following is based on information from the CDC and the American Indian Health Commission.

1. Is the Pfizer vaccine safe?

Over 81,000 people took part in two clinical trials to test the vaccine's safety and efficacy, showing it to be both safe and effective. It has also been reviewed by an independent panel of experts, the FDA, CDC, as well as the Western States Scientific Safety Review Workgroup, which all confirmed the safety findings.

2. What ingredients are in the vaccine?

The Pfizer vaccine contains messenger RNA that carries a protein recipe that mimics the look of the virus. This mRNA is carried in a lipid nanoparticle, a fat particle that protects and transports the mRNA to our cells. There are also some electrolytes, but no antibiotics, medicines, preservatives, fetal cells, human or animal tissue, or other additives.

3. How does the vaccine work?

The vaccine is given by injection to the upper arm. The vaccine contains a recipe that tells the body's cells to produce a type of protein that looks like the COVID-19 virus, but is harmless. This protein essentially tricks the immune system into producing antibodies that protect from COVID-19 infection. A second dose, 21 days later, boosts antibody production.

4. How effective is the Pfizer vaccine?

The vaccine protects 95% of the people who get both doses after about 5 weeks from receiving the first dose. For those who do not get the second dose, protection is not nearly as high. That's why it's so important to get both doses.

5. When do you get second dose? Is it different?

The second dose is given 21 days after the first and is the same as the first. If you receive the vaccine on June 1, you'll need the second dose on June 22. The second dose must also be with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

6. Are there possible side effects?

The most common side effect is injection site pain or swelling. Some may feel nausea, chills, fatigue, fever, or muscle/joint pain. Most people experience mild side effects, if any at all. They rarely interfere with everyday activities, and don't last longer than two days. The good news is these side effects indicate the vaccine is working as intended. None of them are known to produce long-term consequences.

There is a very remote chance the vaccine could cause a severe allergic reaction. These reactions usually happen shortly after getting a dose of the vaccine, which is why a 15 to 30-minute monitoring immediately follows vaccination. If you later experience a reaction – including difficulty breathing, fast heartbeat, swelling in the face or throat, or large rash, contact your health care provider or call 911.

7. Could the vaccine give me COVID-19?

No, it is impossible to get COVID-19 from the vaccine. It does not contain the COVID-19 virus, or anything that could make the virus.

8. Can I still get the virus after vaccination?

It's possible, but unlikely once your antibodies have fully developed. The vaccine becomes 95% effective two-weeks after the 2nd dose.

9. Is this vaccine safe for older people with chronic health conditions?

Current information indicates the vaccine is just as safe and effective in older people with chronic diseases as in young healthy people.

10. How long does immunity last?

Because the vaccine has only been studied for less than a year, we don't know. But other mRNA vaccines immunity usually lasts for several years, often decades.