



Plain Language Edition

**What you need to
know about the
COVID-19 vaccine and
immunocompromised
people**

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What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a bad disease. It makes people very sick. COVID-19 has spread around the world. You can learn more about COVID-19 by reading [our fact sheet on the COVID-19 vaccine](#).

What is the COVID-19 vaccine?

There are now **COVID-19 vaccines**. Vaccines are shots. Vaccines protect you against different diseases. They keep you from getting sick. Each vaccine protects you against one disease. The COVID-19 vaccines help protect you against COVID-19. You can learn more about the vaccines in [our fact sheet on the COVID-19 vaccine](#).

In the United States, the COVID-19 vaccines are free. Anyone 5 years old or older can get one. The vaccines work **really well** to protect you from getting really sick with COVID-19. They work **really well** to keep you from dying from COVID-19. They also protect you from catching COVID-19 at all.

When you get vaccinated, you get a vaccine card. Your vaccine card tells you if you got a 1-shot or 2-shot vaccine. If you got a 1-shot vaccine, it means you got 1 shot. If you got a 2-shot vaccine, it means you got 2 shots. Your vaccine card also tells you the day you got your vaccine.

What does immunocompromised mean?

Immunocompromised means someone's body needs extra help to stop COVID-19. This can be because they have to take medicines that make it hard to fight germs. It can be because something else like a disease makes it hard for their body to fight germs. People who are immunocompromised are more likely to get really sick from COVID-19. People who are immunocompromised are more likely to die from COVID-19.

What are some reasons that people might be immunocompromised?

Here are some reasons why someone might be immunocompromised. These are not all the reasons someone might be immunocompromised:

- If they have cancer and are taking medicine for their cancer.
- If they had an **organ transplant** and need to take medicine to help with the transplant. An organ transplant is when you get an organ like a heart from someone else.
- If they had a **stem cell** transplant and need to take medicine to help with the transplant. Stem cells are a kind of cell in your body.
- If they were born with a body that needs extra help to fight germs.
- If they have an **HIV** infection they aren't taking medicine for. HIV is a kind of germ that makes it hard for your body to fight off other germs.
- If they are taking medicine that makes it hard for their body to fight off germs.

Why are immunocompromised people especially at risk?

Immunocompromised people have bodies that can't fight off germs as well. And their bodies don't learn how to fight germs from vaccines as much. So two things happen:

- Immunocompromised people don't get as much protection from vaccines.
- Immunocompromised people can get really sick if they do catch a disease.

If I'm immunocompromised, can I still get vaccinated for COVID-19?

Yes. The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** says immunocompromised people can still get vaccinated for COVID-19. The CDC is part of the government. They make decisions about COVID-19 vaccines.

If you are immunocompromised, it is really important to get vaccinated for COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccines can stop you from getting really sick from COVID-19. They can stop you from dying of COVID-19. They can also stop you from catching COVID-19 at all.

Immunocompromised people are more likely to get COVID-19. They are more likely to get really sick from COVID-19. They are more likely to die from COVID-19. If you are immunocompromised, you should get vaccinated for COVID-19.

After you get vaccinated, your doctor might do a test. The test will look to see if the vaccine is working. The test will look to see if your body is learning how to fight COVID-19. The test will look to see if your body is protected against COVID-19.

Some people can't get vaccinated for COVID-19. For example, people who are allergic to the vaccine can't get it. These cases don't happen very often. If you think you might not be able to get vaccinated for COVID-19, talk to your doctor.

I'm immunocompromised and already got both shots of the 2-shot vaccine. What do I do now?

You should get a **third dose** of the vaccine. A third dose is another dose of the same vaccine you already got. It is another shot. A third dose is also called an *additional primary dose*. You can get your third dose of the vaccine 28 days after you got your second shot of the vaccine. 28 days is 4 weeks after. You can look at your vaccine card or at a calendar to help you. You could also ask someone for help counting.

We know that immunocompromised people don't get as much protection from the vaccine. Their bodies need extra help. Their bodies need more practice learning how to fight COVID-19. Getting a third dose can help their bodies get more practice. Then, their bodies will be better prepared to fight COVID-19.

If you are 12 years or older, you should also get a **booster shot**. Vaccines teach your body how to fight a germ. They are very good at teaching your body to fight that germ. But sometimes your body starts to forget after a while. When that happens, it helps to get a reminder. A booster is like a reminder for your body. A booster is another shot. It is more vaccine for the same germ as before. It reminds your body how to recognize that germ. It reminds your body how to stop that germ.

Third doses and boosters are different!

If you got 2 shots, you should get a booster shot 3 months after your second shot. If you got a third shot, you should get a booster shot 3 months after your third shot. You can read more about booster shots in [our fact sheet on the COVID-19 vaccine and booster shots](#).

I'm immunocompromised and I got the one-shot vaccine. What should I do now?

You should get a second dose. A second dose is another shot. Your second dose should be from one of the 2-shot vaccines. You can get your second dose 28 days after your first dose.

Then, you should get a booster shot. Booster shots are another COVID-19 vaccine shot you get. The vaccines are really good at teaching your body how to fight COVID-19. But over time, your body forgets how to fight COVID-19. Booster shots help with this. They remind your body how to fight COVID-19. You can get a booster shot two months after your first shot. You can read more about booster shots in [our fact sheet on the COVID-19 vaccine and booster shots](#).

The booster you get should be a different vaccine from the one-shot vaccine. You should get a booster of one of the two-shot vaccines. That will help your immune system learn better. That will give you more protection from COVID-19.

You should get your booster as soon as possible. The one-shot vaccine works well to protect you from COVID-19. But getting a booster shot from one of the two-shot vaccines will help even more.

What's the difference between a third dose and a booster shot?

A third dose is meant for immunocompromised people. Remember, immunocompromised people don't get as much protection from the first two doses. Their bodies don't learn as much. A third dose can give them more protection.

It can teach their bodies how to better fight off COVID-19.

A booster shot is meant for everyone. The vaccines work really well. But their protection goes down over time. Your body forgets some things that the vaccine taught it. Then, your body isn't as good at fighting COVID-19. But a booster shot can help. A booster shot is another dose of the vaccine. It is another shot. It teaches your body again how to fight COVID-19. Everyone needs a reminder.

Should I get a third dose and a booster shot?

Yes. You should get both. If you got a two-shot vaccine and you are immunocompromised, you should get a third dose. You should also get a booster shot. You should get the booster 3 months after the third dose.

I felt sick after my first two shots. Should I still get a third dose?

Yes. You should still get a third dose if you are immunocompromised. It can be hard to feel sick! But feeling sick means the vaccines are working. Your body is learning how to fight off COVID-19. A third dose will help your body fight off COVID-19 even better.

Remember, it is better to feel a little sick when you get a vaccine than to feel really sick because you catch COVID-19. If you are worried about being very sick after your third shot, talk to your doctor. Your doctor can help you make a plan.

What should I do if I think I'm immunocompromised?

You should talk to your doctor. If your doctor tells you to, you should get a third dose of the vaccine. If you haven't gotten vaccinated at all yet, you should get vaccinated. You should continue to do the things you were doing before:

- Keep wearing a mask if you can.
- Keep staying home if you can.
- Keep washing your hands.

Words to Know

Booster

A booster is an extra vaccine that you get to remind your body how to fight a disease

Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC

The CDC is a government agency. The CDC helps us know how to stay safe from diseases

COVID-19

A bad disease that has spread around the world. It makes people very sick and can kill people.

High Risk

High risk means someone is more likely to get very sick from a disease. It can mean it's easier for them to get the disease. It can also mean that if they get the disease, it's easier for them to get very sick.

Immunocompromised

Immunocompromised means that someone's body isn't as good at fighting diseases. It is harder for their bodies to learn to fight germs.

Vaccine

A shot that keeps us from getting sick.

Virus

A virus is a type of germ that can make us sick. Viruses are very small.

To Learn More

- Plain Language COVID-19 Resources: <https://autisticadvocacy.org/resources/covid-pl/>
- A Self-Advocate's Guide to COVID-19: https://gmsavt.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/A_Self_Advocates_Guide_to_COVID-19_2020.pdf
- COVID-19 Vaccine Information in Plain Language: <https://gmsavt.org/resources/covid-19-vaccine-information-in-plain-language>
- COVID-19 Vaccine Facts for the Developmental Disabilities Community: <https://rwjms.rutgers.edu/boggscenter/publications/documents/COVID19VaccineFactsDDCommunity-F.pdf>
- "Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine" Social Story: <https://rwjms.rutgers.edu/boggscenter/publications/documents/GettingACOVID19VaccineSocialStoryIDD-F.pdf>
- Coronavirus/COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions: <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/AIR-Coronavirus-FAQs-508.pdf>
- Infographic about COVID-19 Vaccines: <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/c/coronavirus/coronavirus-vaccines-infographic>
- Myths and Facts About the COVID-19 Vaccine: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/facts.html>
- Frequently Asked Questions about the COVID-19 Vaccine: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>
- Easy to Read COVID-19 Safety: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/easy-to-read/>
- "Care for yourself one small way each day" Fact Sheet: <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/stress-coping/care-for-yourself/pdfs/General-Public-Care-for-Yourself.pdf>

- COVID-19 Information for People with Developmental Disabilities: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/humandevelopment/covid-19/developmental-behavioral-disorders.html>
- COVID-19 Materials for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Care Providers: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/humandevelopment/COVID-19-Materials-for-People-with-IDD.html>
- Baltimore City Health Department infographics about variants: <https://www.facebook.com/BaltimoreHealth/photos/pcb.10159244388310642/101592443854706>
- Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health infographics about how well vaccines work: <https://www.facebook.com/JohnsHopkinsSPH/photos/pcb.10158131891551245/10158131889621245>
- [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) homepage: <https://www.vaccines.gov/>
- Variants of the Virus (CDC) (Not Easy-Read/Plain Language): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/variants.html>