

Stay Safe as COVID-19 Mutates

August 2021

New information is being shared daily about COVID-19. As experts learn more, they will adjust recommendations as they respond to the science.

COVID-19 vaccines approved for emergency use by the Food and Drug Administration are safe, free and readily available. Check with clinics, health departments and pharmacies in your community to get vaccinated for COVID-19.

Why vaccinate for COVID-19?

- The COVID-19 vaccines effectively prevent severe disease and death for most otherwise healthy people.
- Once you're infected with COVID-19 and in the hospital – and possibly on a ventilator – it's too late. Getting vaccinated for COVID-19 will not help at that point.
- Despite being new, these COVID-19 vaccines are the most studied vaccines in the history of the world.
- Unvaccinated people in the U.S. are three times more likely to get infected, eight times more likely to have symptoms and 25 times more likely to be hospitalized. Most people who are dying from COVID-19 are unvaccinated people, and over 97% of hospitalizations are among unvaccinated people.
- In the U.S., 198 million people have been vaccinated for COVID-19 so far. This accounts for more than 350 million doses. Reports of serious adverse events after vaccination continue to be rare. In most cases, these adverse events are not related to COVID-19 vaccines.

Should you be concerned about breakthrough infections?

- You should not be concerned about breakthrough infections. The number of breakthrough infections is still small, and people generally don't develop serious symptoms. It's rare for those who are hospitalized for a breakthrough infection to become severely ill or die.
- If you get mild COVID-19 infection after getting vaccinated for COVID-19, wear a mask, practice social distancing and wash your hands to reduce the amount of virus you spread and reduce the opportunity for mutation.
- Serious illnesses among vaccinated people happen most commonly in those who didn't respond to a COVID-19 vaccine, are immunocompromised, are elderly, or have other underlying health conditions.

Why the urgency about COVID-19 mutations like the delta variant?

- The delta variant is spreading globally and in our communities. It's more contagious than previous strains detected in the U.S., and transmission is increasing.
- The delta variant carries a higher viral load, so it is easier to spread. This means that you could infect around six to eight people, which is greater than with the original strain of COVID-19. This variant is causing more severe illness, which includes younger people who have not yet been vaccinated for COVID-19.
- Viruses constantly change through mutation, and new viral variants are expected to occur as long as people are getting infected. That's why it's recommended that you get vaccinated for COVID-19, wear a mask, practice social distancing and wash your hands.

How can you stay safe and protect others?

- Stay informed, get vaccinated for COVID-19, wear a mask, practice social distancing and wash your hands to stay safe and protect others. Get tested if you are exposed to or have symptoms of COVID-19, and isolate if you test positive.