

# COVID-19 vaccine guidance

## District Health Department No. 4



COVID-19

# VACCINES

MAY COME WITH A KICK

### What You Need to Know.....But NOT be Alarmed About

As always, District Health Department No. 4 is giving it to you straight.

A small percentage of people participating in COVID-19 vaccine trials have experienced short-term discomfort such as high fever, headaches, chills, and fatigue for 12-24 hours after vaccination. The term used to describe this is “reactogenicity” –meaning the discomfort is only temporary and shouldn’t be alarming. In fact, it’s your immune system working just as it should.

But those who have experienced the side effects say it isn’t a walk in the park either –mostly because they weren’t prepared.

So, to better prepare YOU for what could happen and to reassure you that it isn’t serious, here’s more about the COVID-19 vaccine

### COVID-19 VACCINES WILL NOT GIVE YOU COVID-19

According to the CDC, none of the vaccines currently in development in the United States use the live virus that causes COVID-19. While there are several types of vaccines in development, the goal for each of them is to teach our immune systems how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19.

Researchers believe the delivery mechanism vaccines use to send messenger RNA (mRNA) to our cells – a lipid nanoparticle – may cause symptoms, such as those experienced by people who participated in recent trials. The CDC says these symptoms – or side effects – are normal and are a sign that the body is building immunity.

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## HOW BAD ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS?

Most people will escape side effects completely. For a small number of others, the reactogenicity is higher – typically after the second dose. Technically, that means they had a great immune response to the first dose and saw the effects in the second dose. Overall, the reactogenicity of the COVID-19 vaccine is thought to be higher than most flu shots— something more along the lines of a tetanus shot (think sore arm) or shingles vaccine. But compared to the actual effects of COVID-19, it's definitely worth taking acetaminophen and toughing it out for one night. In the words of one researcher, given that COVID-19 can kill, it's a small price to pay for immunity.



## MASS VACCINATION MIGHT AMPLIFY THE APPEARANCE OF SIDE EFFECTS

Think of it this way. If 35 million people are vaccinated in the initial phase, and 2% of them develop a fever as a side effect...that's 700,000 people. This will seem like a higher rate of reactions than we're accustomed to. Do not let this, and resulting media coverage, dissuade you from getting the vaccine! Remember, most people won't have any side effects! And for those who do, it will be short lived.

## mRNA VACCINES WILL NOT ALTER YOUR DNA

mRNA is basically instructions for how to make a protein. It is not able to alter or modify a person's genetic makeup (or DNA). The mRNA from a COVID-19 vaccine never enters the nucleus of a cell where our DNA is kept. Rather, COVID-19 vaccines that use mRNA work with our body's natural defenses to safely develop immunity to disease.

## PEOPLE WHO HAVE GOTTEN SICK FROM COVID-19 MAY STILL BENEFIT FROM GETTING VACCINATED

Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that re-infection with COVID-19 is possible, the CDC is advising everyone to get a COVID-19 vaccine (once available) even if they have been sick with it.

At this time, we don't know how long someone is protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. Early evidence suggests that the immunity you gain from having an infection – called natural immunity – may last only a few months.

We also don't know how long immunity produced by vaccination lasts until we have more data on how well it works.

Both natural immunity and vaccine-induced immunity are important aspects of COVID-19 that experts continue to learn and study.