



Vax myths, questions and facts

Question: Why bother getting the vaccine if I can still get COVID?

Answer: The chances of getting COVID-19, passing it on and dying from it are significantly lower. There have been reports of vaccinated people contracting the virus (called ‘breakthrough cases’) but the vast majority haven’t ended up in hospital or dead especially if they had both doses.

Myth? The vaccines were developed too quickly to be safe

Fact: The vaccine is an mRNA or messenger RNA vaccine. mRNA was discovered in the 1960s and research has been underway for more than 20 years. When COVID-19 appeared scientists had a head start because this virus is similar to the viruses that caused the SARS and MERS outbreaks in 2003 and 2012. As a result scientists were able to identify the virus quickly and having worked on vaccines for these viruses they already knew the part of the virus (the ‘spike protein’) that would be most useful for making a vaccine.

Another reason for the speedy arrival of the vaccines was that scientists and governments got together to develop and trial vaccines; work on other things stopped while everyone focused on this. The vaccine still underwent the same trials you would expect - no short cuts were taken.

Also, one of the main reasons vaccines can take a long time to develop is money but that wasn’t an issue this time.

Myth? The vaccine contains tracking devices/ fetal material/ blood products/ microchips/and products from animals or human cells

Fact: None of these are found in the vaccine. The main ingredient in the vaccine is called messenger RNA or mRNA. It is naturally found in our cells and carries instructions for the ‘spike’ protein on the outside of the COVID-19 virus. There is no active or dead virus in the vaccine, just the mRNA instructions for the spike. By showing our body what the spike looks like, our body then learns to recognise the virus in future and quickly break it down. All the vaccine mRNA is also broken down by the body.

The vaccine also contains a salt solution (buffer) so it matches the fluids in our bodies; a tiny amount of sucrose (sugar) to help store the vaccine at very cold temperatures; and fat. It has no preservatives or animal products so it is ok for vegans.

The Immunisation Advisory Centre website has a large amount of information around the safety and effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine which you can access at <https://covid.immune.org.nz/>

Question: Can the vaccine give me COVID?

Answer: The COVID-19 vaccine doesn’t contain any live (or dead) virus so it won’t give you COVID-19.

Myth? You get terrible side effects

Fact: Some people say they’ve experienced brief pain in the injection site and are unable to lie on their arm that night or do much with their arm for a while. The most common side effects reported in NZ are like those we experience when we have the flu: headache, dizziness, lethargy, nausea, fever, chest discomfort, numbness, joint pain and fainting <https://www.medsafe.govt.nz/COVID-19/safety-report-27.asp>

These are all signs that your immune system is preparing to protect you from future infection.

Not everyone will get side effects and serious reactions are very rare (much rarer than getting COVID).

Some people’s side effects tend to be worse after the second dose; this is because your body is already learning to recognise the spike protein. More info about this is available at <https://covid19.govt.nz/covid-19-vaccines/how-to-get-a-covid-19-vaccination/what-to-expect-when-you-get-your-vaccinations/side-effects-of-covid-19-vaccines/#common-side-effects>

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Myth? Vaccine-related hospitalisations and deaths are being hushed up

Fact: People are admitted to hospital and die in the days after they've had a vaccine but in all but one case there is no evidence that the vaccine caused either. Sadly one death is likely due to vaccine induced myocarditis (awaiting Coroner's determination) which remains an extremely rare event.

Question: What's the point in having 2 vaccines?

Answer: Studies have shown that 2 doses of the Pfizer vaccine are approximately 90-97% effective at protecting against severe illness from COVID-19. Those are pretty good odds

Myth? 5G is responsible for the swift spread of COVID-19

Fact: There are several 'theories' about the relationship between 5G and COVID-19 including one that bacteria can communicate via electromagnetic signals - but COVID-19 is a virus not a bacterium. Few of these theories are new and most of them are mutations or new combinations of existing themes, and none have been proved. It is worth noting that some countries with no 5G have been severely affected by COVID-19 which again challenges this myth that the two things are connected

Myth? Masks don't work

Fact: We know now that this virus is airborne and is spread by people talking, singing, laughing, shouting, etc. Masks stop your breath hitting someone else's face – and stops you being hit by their breath. So wearing a mask is a simple way to minimise the risk

Question: Why can't I just use natural remedies and build up my immunity as protection against COVID-19?

Answer: Unfortunately there is no evidence that healthy people who have a good diet and exercise are immune from COVID-19 and many completely healthy people around the world have died from COVID-19

Myth? Vaccines can cause cancer

Fact: None of the vaccines interact with or alter your DNA in any way so cannot cause cancer

Question: Can the vaccine get into your cells and alter your DNA?

Answer: The vaccine delivers instructions to our cells to start building protection against the spike protein on the outside of the COVID-19 virus. It never enters the nucleus of the cell where our DNA is kept

Myth? Your name goes on a register so you are able to be tracked

Fact: yes there is the COVID Immunisation Register (CIR) which contains everybody's vaccination details, including if you choose not to have it when offered. Information about your health belongs to you so if you lose your vaccination record you can request another copy

Protect yourself and others by knowing how to spot misinformation

<https://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing/misinformation-and-scams/>

Helpful tips from CERT NZ:

- Ask yourself where the information is coming from, and what the author wants you to believe
- Just because an article looks good or reads well does not mean the quality of the information in it is reliable. Many sources of misinformation are well produced
- Before sharing a story it's important to check if it's credible. You can do this by checking where the original story appeared, who is promoting it, and what other people are saying. For instance, do a Google search of the information or the organisation it has come from, and read what trusted reliable sources (such as academics or the mainstream media) say about it

References

<https://www.newsroom.co.nz/why-quick-vaccine-development-is-a-good-thing?>

Doctors Stand Up For Vaccination. Frequently Asked Questions. 31 August 2021

Te Whariki O Te Ara Oranga: Getting the Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccination - FAQ for the mental health and addiction sector. 24 May 2021

For more info on mRNA vaccines see <https://covid.immune.org.nz/resources/video/how-mrna-vaccines-work-simply-explained>

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