

# COVID-19 Vaccine

## Facts & Myths



**FACT:** The COVID-19 vaccine is here! We are so proud that The Arc Westchester has vaccinated over 150 individuals and staff. The vaccine is our single best answer to improving the health crisis, and returning back to our previous and full time way of delivering services. The rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine has been expanded to include all staff that work with individuals at our Residential, Day, Respite services and Wellness Center.

**FACT:** The COVID-19 Vaccine is SAFE! All COVID-19 vaccines were tested in clinical trials involving tens of thousands of people to make sure they meet safety standards and protect adults of different ages, races, and ethnicities. There were no serious safety concerns. CDC and the FDA will keep monitoring the vaccines to look for safety issues after they are authorized and in use.

While scientists and the medical community are celebrating this historic step toward ending a pandemic that has caused hundreds of thousands of deaths and sickened millions of people in the U.S., many Americans are still hesitant to get vaccinated. In addition, this is due in large part to some myths and false information about the COVID-19 vaccine. We know that you want to do everything you can to protect yourself, your families, the individuals we support and our colleagues.

- ✓ We also want to know what additional information or support you may find helpful regarding the COVID-19 vaccine.
- ✓ We just want to make sure that everyone has the facts.
- ✓ The choice to take the vaccine is yours.



**MYTH:** *The “fast-tracked” COVID-19 vaccine is risky because it wasn’t studied on enough people, or for long enough.*

- This is probably the biggest false information about the COVID-19 vaccine, and it is understandable that people would have concerns that it was developed, tested, and approved in a relatively short amount of time.
- However, even though the vaccine was created in under a year, that doesn’t mean any shortcuts were made.  
The Pfizer-BioNTech study was very well done and included more than 20,000 participants—this number of participants is similar to those in non-COVID vaccine studies.
- One of the biggest time savers was that the creation of the vaccine was done together with the testing.

**MYTH: *I had COVID, so that means I don't need the vaccine. Anyway, the natural immunity that comes with getting COVID is better than vaccine immunity.***

- With most infections, natural immunity is better than immunity from a vaccine. However, COVID may be the exception. While further research is needed to determine if this is true, it does not appear that having COVID produces lifelong immunity.
- That's why a prior history of COVID is not a reason not to get the vaccine, and why people will not be screened before vaccination.
- However, given that the vaccine will be in short supply for several months, we do recommend that if you have recently had COVID, you consider waiting to get vaccinated until others have had the opportunity to get it first.

**MYTH: *There's a chance that the vaccine might give me COVID.***

- There is no chance of getting COVID from the vaccine. The COVID vaccine is not a live virus vaccine. You can't get COVID from the vaccine because there is no COVID in the vaccine.

**MYTH: *The COVID-19 vaccine will alter my DNA.***

- The COVID-19 vaccine is a newer type of vaccine called a messenger RNA vaccine, or mRNA. This vaccine increases the body's immunity so the patient is less likely to catch an infectious disease like COVID-19.
- The RNA in the vaccine does not alter or interact with your DNA (genetic information) or any other part of your body.

**MYTH: *There's a microchip in the vaccine.***

- No! The COVID-19 vaccine does not contain any sort of microchip or tracking! The vaccine is about preventing more cases, hospital stays and deaths.

**MYTH: *The vaccine will make me more susceptible to illness while it takes effect.***

- There's no proof or even evidence to suggest that this is true.
- The vaccine that makes you immune to COVID-19 does not make you more susceptible to other diseases.

**MYTH: *If everyone else around me gets the vaccine, I don't need to get it because I will benefit from herd immunity.***

- We are a long way off from herd immunity, which may take up to another year to 18 months to achieve. Herd immunity occurs when enough people become immune to a disease to make its spread unlikely. As a result, the entire community is protected, even those who are not themselves immune. Herd immunity is usually achieved through vaccination, but it can also occur through natural infection.

**MYTH: *If everyone else around me gets the vaccine, I don't need to get it because I will benefit from herd immunity. (continued)***

- Right now in this country, roughly 3,000 people a day are dying of COVID. Therefore, it is not in anyone's best interest to wait for herd immunity.
- There are large segments of the population who will not be eligible for the vaccine or for whom it is not recommended, at least initially, and that includes children and the immunosuppressed, do not respond to vaccines as well as healthy people.
- There are going to be vulnerable people out there for a long time to come, and that is why -we urge everyone who can get vaccinated to get the vaccine.

**MYTH: *I just got the flu shot, so that gives me some protection against COVID.***

- The flu shot does not provide any immunity to COVID and vice versa. Each vaccine treats a different disease, and both vaccines are needed.

**MYTH: *The COVID-19 vaccine is not recommended for people who have severe allergies***

- All vaccines can cause allergic reactions, and this vaccine is no exception. Allergic reactions to the vaccine appear to be rare, but as more people are vaccinated, additional information will educate us more.
- While having a history of allergies should not prevent you from getting the vaccine, for those who have had a history of severe allergic reactions, a discussion with their physician is recommended.
- Caution would be advised for people who have a history of anaphylaxis and they may need to be watched for about 30 minutes after they get the vaccine, and should receive it in a facility that can rapidly and effectively respond, should a severe reaction occur.

Reference: **Bruce Farber, MD**, (2020) Chief of Infectious Diseases, Northwell Health - *COVID-19 Vaccine Myths Debunked and CDC website*