Get the Facts about the COVID-19 Vaccine
What is the COVID-19 vaccine?

- Vaccination is our most effective defense against the COVID-19 pandemic. Getting a vaccine protects you from getting sick or spreading the virus to another person. After you are vaccinated, you can do more, like gather indoors without a mask. Once enough people in our community have the vaccine, we can resume the activities that were put on hold in 2020.

- COVID-19 is caused by a type of coronavirus—a large family of related viruses that includes the common cold. Researchers were able to use existing research done on other coronaviruses to develop COVID-19 vaccines relatively quickly. Tens of thousands of people took part in three phases of safety trials before each vaccine was approved for the general public. To date, more than 100 million people have now received these vaccines in the United States.

How do the vaccines work?

- **mRNA Vaccines:** The Pfizer BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are mRNA vaccines. To trigger an immune response, many vaccines put a weakened or inactivated virus into our bodies, but not mRNA vaccines. Instead, they teach our cells how to make a harmless protein that prompts the immune system to produce antibodies.

  These vaccines require two doses. You will need to get your second dose three weeks or one month after your first, depending on the brand. If you miss the date, you can get your second dose later, but you cannot take it earlier than the recommended date.

- **Viral Vector Vaccines:** The Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine is a viral vector vaccine. Viral vector vaccines use an inactivated virus to deliver instructions to our cells. The virus used in the vaccine has been modified so that it cannot make you sick. You only need a single shot of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

- None of these vaccines contain live virus, so you cannot get COVID-19 from them.

How effective are COVID-19 vaccines?

No vaccine can prevent 100% of illness, but all of the available COVID-19 vaccines have proven highly effective at preventing infection. When you hear statistics like “95% effective,” that doesn’t mean that 5% of vaccinated people will get the disease—it means that vaccinated people are 95% less likely to be infected than people who have not been vaccinated.

It is difficult to compare effectiveness among different vaccines because each was tested at a different time during the pandemic when the chances of being infected without a vaccine were different. For all three vaccines, less than 1% of people in trial groups were infected and those who were infected had milder symptoms or no symptoms at all.
What can I expect after getting the vaccine?

You may have a reaction after getting the shot, which is normal and means that your body is building protection. These symptoms should go away in a few days. Some people have no side effects. More common ones include:

- Pain, redness, and swelling at the injection site
- Fever
- Chills
- Tiredness
- Muscle aches
- Joint pain
- Headache
- Nausea

You may take over-the-counter medicine, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen, for any pain and discomfort you experience after getting vaccinated. It is not recommended you take these medicines before vaccination, because we don’t yet know how they interact with the vaccine.

Try to exercise the arm where you got the injection, and drink plenty of fluids.

What about more serious side effects?

- Some people have experienced anaphylaxis, which is a severe allergic reaction, after getting their vaccine. If you have had this kind of allergic reaction to other medicines or foods in the past, it’s important to say so on your registration form because you might be at higher risk. You can still get the vaccine, but you will need to wait longer after your shot so that a nurse can make sure you’re safe.

- There is also a very small risk of developing blood clots after receiving the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, especially for women under the age of 50.

- You can use the V-Safe app to report any side effects to the CDC.

How do I get the vaccine?

- Go to stlcorona.com and click “Vaccine Appointments” or look at a calendar of vaccination opportunities on the “Events” page. Not all events require an appointment. Each of the three County clinics offer COVID-19 vaccines on a walk-in basis every weekday.

- All adults 18 and older can get the Moderna or Johnson & Johnson vaccine. The Pfizer vaccine is approved for anyone over the age of 12. Minors will need a consent form signed by a parent or guardian. You can print or download the form from the stlcorona.com appointments page.

- Vaccinations are free of charge, even if you don’t have insurance. You don’t need to show an ID or proof of residence to be vaccinated at Saint Louis County sites.
Health Centers

John C. Murphy Health Center
6121 North Hanley Road, Berkeley, MO 63134
(314) 615-0500

North Central Community Health Center
4000 Jennings Station Road, St. Louis, MO 63121
(314) 615-9700

South County Health Center
4580 South Lindbergh Boulevard, Sunset Hills, MO 63127
(314) 615-0400

St. Louis County COVID-19 Hotline

Monday through Friday
8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
(314) 615-2660

Email

To request more information or to have someone present this information to your organization, contact us at:
education.doh@stlouiscountymo.gov.

For more information, visit revivestl.com.