

PERC NEWSLETTER



*COVID-19 Updates
Vaccine Site Finder*



Staff Spotlight



*Research
Opportunities*

*Recovery is an active process.
It is not something you wait for.
You have to go and get it by engaging in
activities, interests, and passions!*

*CT-R
Tip of the Season*

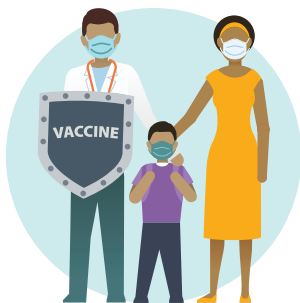
COVID-19 Vaccines

Vaccines (shots) are one of the tools we have to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.



To stop this pandemic, we need to use all of our prevention tools. Vaccines are one of the most effective tools to protect your health and prevent disease. Vaccines work with your body's natural defenses so **your body will be ready to fight the virus**, if you are exposed (also called immunity). Other steps, like wearing a mask that covers your nose and mouth and staying at least 6 feet away from other people you don't live with, also help stop the spread of COVID-19.

Studies show that COVID-19 **vaccines are very effective** at keeping you from getting COVID-19. Experts also think that getting a COVID-19 vaccine may help keep you from getting seriously ill even if you do get COVID-19. These vaccines cannot give you the disease itself.



The vaccines are safe. The U.S. vaccine safety system makes sure that all vaccines are as safe as possible. All the COVID-19 vaccines that are being used have gone through the same safety tests and meet the same standards as any other vaccines produced through the years. A system in place across the entire country that allows CDC to watch for safety issues and make sure the vaccines stay safe.



Different types of COVID-19 vaccines will be available. Most of these vaccines are given in two shots, one at a time and spaced apart. The first shot gets your body ready. The second shot is given at least three weeks later to make sure you have full protection. If you are told you need two shots, make sure that you get both of them. The vaccines may work in slightly different ways, but all types of the vaccines will help protect you.



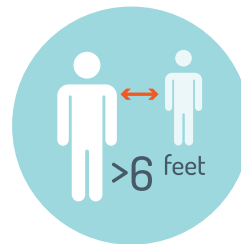


The vaccines may cause side effects in some people, like sore muscles, feeling tired, or mild fever. These reactions mean the vaccine is working to help teach your body how to fight COVID-19 if you are exposed. For most people, these side effects will last no longer than a day or two.

Having these types of side effects does NOT mean that you have COVID-19. If you have questions about your health after your shot, call your doctor, nurse, or clinic. As with any medicine, it is rare but possible to have a serious reaction, such as not being able to breathe. It is very unlikely that this will happen, but if it does, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

When you get the vaccine, you *and* your healthcare worker will both need to wear masks.

CDC recommends that during the pandemic, people wear a mask that covers their nose and mouth when in contact with others outside their household, when in healthcare facilities, and when receiving any vaccine, including a COVID-19 vaccine.



Even after you get your vaccine, you will need to keep wearing a mask that covers your nose **and** mouth, washing your hands often, and staying at least 6 feet away from other people you do not live with. This gives you and others the best protection from catching the virus. Right now, experts don't know how long the vaccine will protect you, so it's a good idea to continue following the guidelines from CDC and your health department. **We also know not everyone will be able to get vaccinated right away, so it's still important to protect yourself and others.**

Is the vaccine made from the COVID virus? No.

How mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines Work

Understanding the virus that causes COVID-19.

Coronaviruses, like the one that causes COVID-19, are named for the crown-like spikes on their surface, called **spike proteins**. These **spike proteins** are ideal targets for vaccines.

What is mRNA?

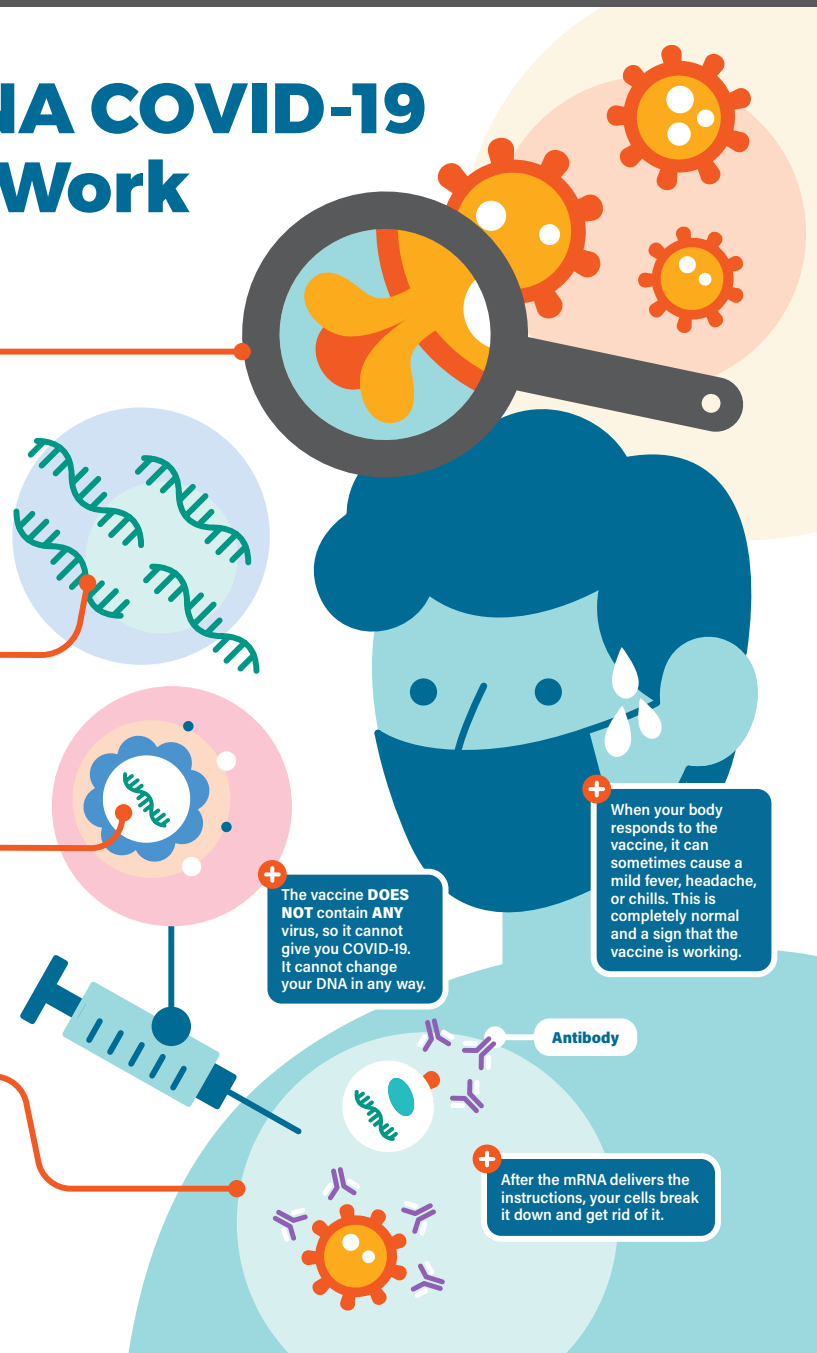
Messenger RNA, or mRNA, is genetic material that tells your body how to make proteins.

What is in the vaccine?

The vaccine is made of mRNA wrapped in a coating that makes delivery easy and keeps the body from damaging it.

How does the vaccine work?

The mRNA in the vaccine teaches your cells how to make copies of the **spike protein**. If you are exposed to the real virus later, your body will recognize it and know how to fight it off.



GETTING VACCINATED?

For information about COVID-19 vaccine, visit: cdc.gov/coronavirus/vaccines





Accelerating advances in early psychosis care, recovery outcomes, and scientific discovery through a national early psychosis learning health care partnership

How Do I Decide Whether to Get the COVID-19 Vaccine?



How Your Life Will Change if Vaccinated

- The vaccine is free. No information is collected about you when you receive a vaccine, other than what is needed for your care.
- Once fully vaccinated, which is 2 weeks after receiving your final vaccine dose, you can be with other vaccinated friends without masks or social distancing. You may also get together indoors without masks around unvaccinated people who are not at high risk for COVID-19 infection. In contrast, people who are not fully vaccinated still need to wear masks and socially distance with anyone not living with them.
- More relaxations of the rules are likely in the coming weeks and months for people who are fully vaccinated. There may be a “vaccine passport” that will allow vaccinated people to do things more easily in society than people who do not get the vaccine. For example, go to work or school without restriction or go to restaurants and entertainment without restriction.

Some Questions and Answers



Question

Was the vaccine review process OK? Seems like they moved too quickly and didn't give out enough information.

Answer

The vaccine tests followed all of the standard rules. Safety was a top priority in developing them. They were tested in very large clinical trials where they were shown to protect people from getting very sick or dying from COVID-19. Experts all over the world have agreed that they are ready and a safe.

The vaccines are currently approved by the government under an “emergency use authorization.” Emergency use does not mean it is risky to take the vaccine. Instead, it allows us to receive the vaccine quickly and to reduce the death and suffering from COVID-19. Emergency use is the part of the law that allows approval of treatments to combat public health emergencies. During the COVID-19 health emergency, the government has approved a number of medical products under emergency use authorization including vaccines and personal protective equipment used by healthcare providers.

Concerned about getting vaccinated? It's normal to be cautious when something is new.

Common Questions and Answers

Q: Can I take a "wait-and-see approach" and wait to get the vaccine once I see that others are okay?

A: Vaccines prevent COVID-19 infection in roughly 95 out of 100 people who would otherwise get sick. They prevent hospitalization and death in ALL people who received a vaccine! If enough people get vaccinated, everyone is safer. The virus mostly disappears when most people are protected by the vaccine. If vaccinated, here are things you would enjoy doing again: hugging grandparents, being back in the classroom, going back to work in person, going to a concert, going back to the gym, playing with sports team, going to your place of worship, meeting face to face with friends. You could help protect your parents, other family members, people who are immunocompromised in your community, and the elderly in your neighborhood.

Q: Do the COVID-19 vaccines contain some bad ingredients that might harm people?

A: No, the vaccines only contain ingredients that are needed to help your body fight the virus.

Q: What information will the government or insurance collect from me?

A: Only the information that is needed to provide the vaccine.

Q: Will the vaccine change my DNA?

A: It does not change or harm your DNA. It gives instructions for your own body to produce a response that fights the virus.

Q: What if I have a bad reaction to it? I hear it can make people pretty sick.

A: Allergic reactions to the vaccine are very rare and have happened mainly in people with a history of severe allergic reactions. 35-40 out of 100 people have reactions such as headache, being tired, or fever for a few hours or perhaps a day or two. This is normal and shows your body is ready to fight the virus.

Q: I hear the virus is changing all the time. What if the vaccine doesn't work because of the changes?

A: The vaccines protect us against COVID-19. Getting enough people vaccinated quickly may limit the danger of the virus changing further.

Q: Will the vaccine impact my symptoms or change the effect of medications I'm taking?

A: It's safe for people with mental health problems, and does not change the effects of psychiatric medications.

Q: I am young; how serious a problem is COVID-19 for me?

A: Although young people tend to do better with COVID-19, they can still develop long-term problems; they can also infect others around them even if they don't get very sick.

Q: How many shots will I need and how quickly do they work?

A: There are several COVID-19 vaccines approved for use. Many require 2 shots, separated by 3 or 4 weeks. Some require a single shot. You are considered "fully vaccinated" 2 weeks after the final (or only) shot. We don't yet know if the vaccine works beyond one year.

Q: If I get vaccinated, will I experience long-term side-effects?

A: Researchers don't know all the answers yet. We do know that approximately 10-30% of individuals who get COVID-19 and survive will experience long-term side-effects of the virus. Some side-effects of the virus include prolonged: fatigue, muscle or body-aches, difficulties breathing, headaches, difficulties with focus, inability to exercise or be active, anxiety, difficulties sleeping, memory issues, and dizziness. These individuals have been termed 'COVID Long-haulers.'

Q: Should I get vaccinated if I've already had COVID-19?

A: The CDC recommends the vaccine for everyone including those who have had COVID-19.

For More Information

Find a Vaccine Near You:

- <https://www.vaccines.gov/>

Benefits of Getting Vaccinated:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/vaccine-benefits.html>

Pfizer Fact Sheet:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/Pfizer-BioNTech.html>

Moderna Fact Sheet:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/Moderna.html>

Johnson & Johnson Fact Sheet:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/janssen.html>

Vaccine Fact Sheet in Spanish:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/vaccines/facts-covid-vaccines-spanish-508.pdf>

Common Questions and Answers were Adapted from the

Early Psychosis Intervention Network

For More Information about EPINET Visit

<https://nationalepinet.org/>

Get Out! Summertime Activities

Introduction

COVID-19 restrictions are loosening and people are starting to return back to engaging in pre-pandemic everyday life activities! However, moving from being stuck inside, having significantly less to do, and returning back to regular day-to-day activities can be stressful. As a result, many people are noticing changes in their anxiety levels and mood. Behavioral Activation is a strategy that can be helpful for lifting anxiety, improving low mood, and assisting people in adapting back into society.

Behavioral Activation: Engage in Activities, Interests, and Passions!

Re-adapting back to life again with loosened pandemic restrictions can bring about drastic changes in a person’s thoughts, emotions, body sensations, and behaviors. Often these changes can cause anxiety, low mood, or other feelings.

Here's a list of common signs of low mood:

• Changes in appetite	• Lack of productivity
• Difficulties sleeping	• Less engagement in enjoyable activities
• Difficulties with focus, attention, or memory	• Ruminative thought patterns
• Lack of energy	• Increased guilt
• Sadness, emptiness, hopelessness	• Irritability

Notice any of these changes in yourself when you’re feeling down?

INCREASING YOUR ACTIVITY LEVEL

By using behavioral strategies, engaging in pleasurable activities, and tackling small accomplishable tasks you can tackle feeling down, experience positive emotions, and begin to feel better!

GENERATE POSITIVE FEELINGS

Tackling tasks and engaging in pleasurable activities that give you a sense of pleasure, accomplishment, or mastery can help you feel better!

For example, washing and folding your laundry can help you feel neat and organized, and may also help you feel accomplished or satisfied when you wear one of your newly washed items! Feeling productive and accomplished can help bring about positive emotions, provide you with motivation to tackle more tasks, and bring about a cycle of even more positive emotions!

START SMALL

We know getting active when you’re feeling down is easier said than done. The reality is, it’s not always easy to get started. Negative beliefs such as “I’m incapable”, “I’m a failure”, or “I’m worthless”, often prevent people from getting started. People also often think about their end goal rather than the small tasks needed to reach a long-term goal. For example, if someone used to go to the gym 5 days a

week and stopped for several months, it would be unrealistic to expect their body's to be able to go back to working out 5 days per week.

If someone were to set their first goal as getting back to the gym 5 days per week, creating a large unrealistic goal often results in failure, disappointment, and a lack of motivation to try again. The idea is to start small, complete baby steps, and eventually get back on track to working out 5 days a week in the future.

Instead for a goal like this we'd recommend tinier more realistic goals such as the following: not going to the gym, but instead putting on gym clothes, go to the gym and not going inside, go inside the gym and walk around, touch a machine and leave, get on a machine and hope off, use a machine, etc. Tiny goals and steps can help decrease burden, increase feelings of accomplishment, and are more likely to set individuals up for success!

However, sometimes tasks are difficult to accomplish and setting time periods may be more accomplishable. For example, walk around your house or go to the gym for 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 20 minutes, workout for 5 minutes, 10 mins, 20 mins, etc. Similar strategies to the ones listed above can be applied to all goals!

The first most important thing is that you're trying to do something rather than nothing. Even setting a goal is taking you one small step in the right direction!

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

1. Write down a small accomplishable goal for yourself in the line below:

2. Write down your mood *BEFORE* you complete your goal:

3. Write down your mood *AFTER* you complete your goal:

4. Analyze yourself:

- Were you able to complete your goal? _____
- Was the goal small and accomplishable _____
- Whether you were successful or not, try again! What's a new small accomplishable goal for next time? _____

(MATERIALS ADAPTED FROM: NATHAN, P., REES, C., LIM, L., & CORREIA, H., 2003)

Research Opportunities

A Translational and Neurocomputational Evaluation of a D1R Partial Agonist for Schizophrenia

This research study is studying PF-0641252 as a possible treatment for early-course schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder or related psychotic disorder. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) is funding this research study.

The purpose of this research is to test whether an experimental drug, added to a person's usual medication regimen, can help thinking and memory in people with schizophrenia. If you decide to take part in this research study, the general procedures include some clinical assessments and interviews, some computer tests, blood work, and a physical exam. Upon successfully completing the screening process, you would complete 7 total study visits (the first being spread across a few days), 5 of which would be test days involving study treatment with the pill named PF-06412562 in which you will receive a randomized dose.

Open to ages 18 to 45.

Study participants will be compensated for their time and travel.

SSBC: Schizophrenia Spectrum Biomarker Consortium

The purpose of this research study is to identify biological markers for schizophrenia and related mental illnesses. We are gathering medical information, behavioral assessments, cells and genetic material (DNA), as well as blood and cerebrospinal fluid (CSF), and brain images from persons who appear to have a psychiatric disorder and those who do not in order to make this research possible.

This research study is open to individuals:

- Diagnosed with Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorder, ages 18 to 40
- Healthy controls, ages 18 to 40
- Individuals "clinically high risk" exhibiting symptoms that usually precede the onset of schizophrenia spectrum disorders, ages 18 – 30

Study procedures include clinical interview, computerized test, MRI, blood draw, urine test and spinal tap (lumbar puncture).

Clinical high-risk population will complete baseline visit and follow-up visits every 6 months for up to 3 years, with shorter check-in visits every 3 months. Schizophrenia spectrum disorder and healthy comparison population: baseline visit and follow-up visits every 6 months up to 3 years

Study participants will be compensated for their time and travel.

Services offered at PERC

Recovery Planning: The individual and the treatment team work collaboratively to develop a recovery plan that identifies goals and plans for services, and methods based on the individual's needs and preferences.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)/Case Management: A Master's or PhD Level Specialist provides a form of CBT developed to treat psychosis by Aaron Beck and colleagues.

Psychopharmacology: The program provides ongoing evidence-based psychopharmacology for early-episode psychosis, with emphasis on minimizing medication exposure and side effects.

Cognitive Remediation: The remediation intervention facilitated by a licensed psychotherapist and doctoral student administers a weekly 60-minute session in a small group format based on BrainHQ: modules from Posit Science Inc.: 1) Attention; 2) Speeded Processing; 3) Memory; 4) People Skills; 5) Intelligence. All interventions are delivered via a secure internet login allowing for practice from home on a daily basis.

Multi-family Group Psychoeducation: Ongoing monthly meetings provided by an experienced clinician provide education, support and coping strategies for families.

Recovery-Oriented Cognitive Therapy for Families: A closed, 12-week group for families aimed at improving families understanding, coping, and communication skills with their family member in the early stages of psychosis.

Supported Employment Educational Services: A dedicated support person establishes plans for functional goals and recovery with the participant. The support person assists possible return to school, access to jobs and training programs.

Peer Support Services: Individuals in recovery offer peer support and education services in the community to young persons currently experiencing psychosis in an effort to help maintain functioning.

Telehealth Services: Optional telehealth services available for therapy and case management appointments.

Substance Use Treatment: We coordinate with local substance use treatment programs to provide substance use treatment to participants that is also integrated with other services.

Participant Process Group: The program offers ongoing monthly process groups that are facilitated by a licensed psychotherapist to support psychosocial skill development & functioning.

Staff Spotlight



Tamara Welikson, Ph.D., our new manager at the University of Pennsylvania's Psychosis Evaluation and Recovery Center (PERC), is a licensed clinical psychologist in Pennsylvania and New York. Prior to PERC, Dr. Welikson gained experience working within several university hospital-based behavioral medicine outpatient, inpatient, and research settings. Specifically related to psychosis, while working for the Stony Brook University Consortium Program, University of Arizona's Early Psychosis Intervention Center, Banner University Medical Center, and the UCLA Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behaviors' Aftercare Research Program, Center for the Assessment and Prevention of Prodromal States, and Adolescent Brain-Behavior Research Center, she gained direct experience working with children, adolescents, and young adults, diagnosed with or at clinical high risk for developing mental health conditions. Dr. Welikson's research has focused on neuropsychological functioning, neurocognition, neurocognitive factors related to encephalopathy-immunodeficiencies, and virtual reality technology of functional capacity in individuals diagnosed with early onset psychosis. Throughout each experience she valued providing each individual with the tools, techniques, and increased understanding needed to help program participants and their families cope with their unique challenges and experiences. Dr. Welikson looks forward to continuing a similar role as the newest member of the PERC team!

Recent PERC Events

January 2021

- Setting Our Focus for Family Support in 2021

February 2021

- Overview of Clinical Symptoms and Treatment in Early Psychosis

March 2021

- Inspiring Action Through Recovery Oriented Cognitive Therapy & Impact of Stigma

April 2021

- Building Meaningful Relationships and Overcoming Challenges That Can Get in the Way

May 2021

- Understanding Substance Use

June 2021

- Certified Peer Specialists (CPS) at PERC
- Lifespan Brain Institute of CHOP and UPENN Virtual Open House

Future PERC Events

The PERC team will not be hosting any events in July or August.

- **Next event will be hosted in September 2021, entitled: 'PERC Program Overview'.**