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GET THE FACTS AND GET THE VACCINE!

There are a lot of confusing and conflicting messages out there about the COVID-19 vaccine. In this guide, we hope to provide clear, science-based information you can use.

It's natural to have questions about the vaccine, just as you would about any health issue. And it's important to get the facts from sources you can trust. Facts, not opinions. Facts grounded in science.

What you need to know now

COVID-19 is a real and very serious disease. It can cause severe illness, serious long-term health problems, and even death.

COVID-19 is caused by a coronavirus that is changing rapidly to become even more contagious and cause more severe disease. The more it spreads, the more it changes or mutates. These mutations are called variants.

The Delta variant of the coronavirus is the cause of more than 80 percent of the cases of COVID-19 right now, in August 2021. The Delta variant spreads much faster and more easily than the original virus. Scientists and physicians say it spreads as quickly and easily as chicken pox. It causes even more serious disease than the original virus, and it affects younger, healthier people, even children, not just older or sicker people.

In the U.S., more than 99 percent of the deaths from COVID-19 are occurring among unvaccinated people. The vaccine has been shown to prevent serious disease, hospitalization, and death in almost everyone who has received it.

The vaccine is the best defense—but not the only one—we have against the coronavirus and all the variants we know of right now, including the Delta variant. Hundreds of millions of people have received the vaccine, with very, very few side effects. The vaccine is safe and effective.

Why should I get a vaccine?

Getting the vaccine is an individual decision that can affect the whole community. Unvaccinated people can become infected and spread the disease to their loved ones, their neighbors, and others in their community who are at high risk for severe disease.

The more the virus spreads, the more chances it has to mutate or change. Future mutations, or variants, could be even more contagious and cause more serious illness than those we know right now.

Some of the most vulnerable people in our communities can't take the vaccine, or, if they do take it, it might not be as effective because their immune systems don't work well. This includes people being treated for cancer and people who have had organ transplants. Also, children under 12 can't get the vaccine yet.

These vulnerable people are counting on us to protect them by getting the vaccine. The more people who get the vaccine, the less the virus will spread and mutate.



If I get a vaccination, will I still need to wear a mask and socially distance?

In areas where the spread of the virus is high, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that even fully vaccinated people wear masks and socially distance in public spaces. Right now, Mississippi is one of the states where the virus level is high.

The vast majority of cases right now are of the Delta variant of the coronavirus. And the science shows that even fully vaccinated people can be infected by the Delta variant, though they usually have far less severe disease than people who are unvaccinated. If vaccinated people do get it, they can spread it to others, even if they don't develop serious symptoms.

So, for all these reasons, you should protect yourself and others by wearing a mask in public spaces or when you are around people whose vaccine status you don't know.

Be sure to follow the guidelines from your local, state, or federal government or your school, workplace, or other businesses in your community.

You are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after your single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine or two weeks after the second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine. **If you are not fully vaccinated, then you definitely need to continue wearing a mask and staying 6 feet away at all times from people who do not live in your household.**

If you plan to travel, be sure to check the requirements for the airlines, bus lines, and your destination before you leave. Some may require negative COVID test results, proof of vaccination, and/or masks.

And as a good health practice, wash your hands often, using soap and water, for at least 20 seconds, especially after using a restroom, before eating, and after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.

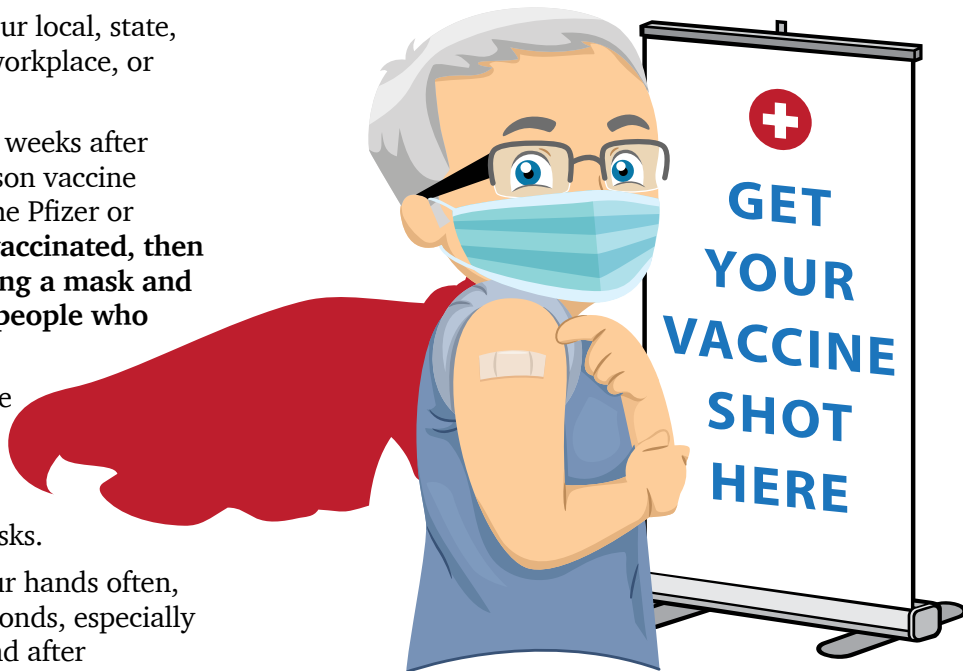
Be a hero.

Think of the COVID-19 vaccines the same way you do of the vaccines for polio, smallpox, whooping cough, and measles. They are something we all do to protect ourselves and the most vulnerable people among us, like cancer patients and little children. Protecting people is just what heroes do.

If you have questions about whether the COVID vaccine is right for you, talk to your doctor, your pharmacist, or your healthcare provider.

Get the science-based facts you need. And get the vaccine. You'll be a hero to all of us.

Find the answers to more vaccine-related questions in our COVID vaccine FAQ at <http://msuext.ms/vaccinefaq>.



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