COVID-19 Vaccine Q&A

When we embody God's healing to others, we join in God's healing activity. The Scriptures call us to the possibility of transforming the health of people or communities. Providing straightforward answers to common questions about COVID-19 vaccines in order to encourage people to receive a vaccine is one practical way to do this.

Q. How were the vaccines developed so fast?
A. The first vaccines were "messenger RNA," or mRNA vaccines. These used research that had been in process for many years for other viruses. With extra funding and focused research by scientists to solve the final steps, they went into trials quickly. Since the virus was prevalent, many infected people were available to study in trials and provide the needed data quickly. (Source: CDC, NIH)

Q. Is this vaccine still considered experimental?
A. No. It is offered under the FDA's "emergency use authorization" to facilitate availability during a public health crisis. It is not experimental because it has cleared all safety standards, which have not been lowered in any way for this vaccine. (Source: Mayo, FDA, CDC, New England Journal of Medicine)

Q. Do I need a vaccine if I already had COVID-19?
A. Yes. About 10 percent who recover from COVID-19 have weak antibodies that wear off, so they may be reinfected. We don't know who will be in this 10 percent, so the guideline is for everyone to receive the vaccine. (Source: biorxiv.org)

Q. What happens if I only get one dose?
A. After about two weeks, your immunity to COVID-19 will reach about 50 percent. Without a second dose, it will remain at that level rather than go up to 95 percent. (Source: Pfizer data)

Q. How long does it take for me to be immune to COVID-19?
A. After about two weeks, your immunity to COVID-19 will reach about 50 percent. Then after another 21 or 28 days you will get a second dose. Two weeks after the second dose is when you reach 95 percent immunity. So plan on a process of five to six weeks. (Source: Pfizer data)

Q. If I get vaccinated, why do I still need to wear a mask and social distance?
A. It takes a few weeks for your body to build up protection. Also, we do not know if vaccines keep you from getting infected (we hope so!) or just keep you from getting sick if you are infected and you might still infect others who are not vaccinated (we hope not). This is still under study. (Source: Pfizer and Moderna trial data)

Q. Can I still get COVID-19 if I get the vaccine?
A. Yes. The vaccines available now are about 95 percent effective if you receive both doses. That's not 100 percent, so that means some vaccinated people might still get sick if infected. However, the vaccine will reduce the risk of severe symptoms or hospitalization. (Source: CDC, Mayo)

Q. Will the vaccines protect against new variants?
A. Yes. The new variants that turned up in the UK (B.1.1.7) and South Africa (501.V2) are similar enough that if you are vaccinated, your body will recognize them and respond to fight them. (Source: Pfizer data)

Additional Resources:

Shelby County Health Department: https://shelby.community/

Tennessee Department of Health: tn.gov/health.html

Center for Disease Control: cdc.gov

Church Health
ChurchHealth.org

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