



# Q&As

[#YesToVaccines](#)

Answers are  
provided by

**Doc. MUDr. Alexandra  
Bražinová, Phd., MPH,**

**an epidemiologist from the  
Institute of Epidemiology at the  
Comenius University Faculty of  
Medicine in Bratislava. She is  
also a member of the informal  
initiative of Slovak scientists  
and medical experts Veda  
pomáha - COVID-19.**



## Why is it important to get vaccinated?

### *Why should I get vaccinated?*

- A vaccine is the most reliable form of prevention against infection and a severe case of illness. By getting a vaccine, you are not only protecting yourself but those around you. It is a method that allows your immune system to build up a long-term response against COVID-19. This is because the vaccine activates the production of specific antibodies and cellular immunity which both help to protect your body when it's in contact with a SARS-CoV-2 infection in the future.

### *What level of collective immunity do we need to be able to live as we did before the pandemic?*

- The only way how to stop the pandemic is through collective immunity. This is because thanks to collective immunity, even those who are not vaccinated have a certain level of protection. To be able to protect those who won't get vaccinated for medical or other reasons, we need to get as many people vaccinated as possible. In number terms that is at least 70-75% of the population.

### *Isn't achieving herd immunity enough to defeat the virus?*

- Building collective immunity against COVID-19 in this way is dangerous. Every individual that contracts the virus can have a severe case of the disease or even die. Even if you happen to have an asymptomatic or mild case of the disease, you can still infect those around you and they might not be so lucky. Also, this type of collective immunity building would actually take much longer. Thus, achieving collective immunity through a robust vaccination effort is the safest and quickest way to end the pandemic.

# Vaccine safety, side-effects, and risks of infecting your loved ones

## ***Is the vaccine safe?***

- The safety of each vaccine registered by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) was tested on a sample of at least 30 000 people in various countries around the world. Publicly available clinical trial data shows that serious side-effects have been reported rarely and with deaths occurring in exceptionally rare cases. The causality of their occurrence with the vaccine is regularly evaluated.

## ***Can the vaccine be trusted when it was developed so quickly?***

- Scientific knowledge and technological progress have allowed for much more rapid development of the vaccine than we are used to. All scientists working on developing the vaccine based their research on many years of previous and existing research into the virus that causes the infectious disease SARS. This is because SARS is evolutionarily similar to COVID-19. Also, existing technologies and verified methodologies that we have thanks to the development of vaccines such as the one against Hepatitis B were used in the development of the British vaccine. Some vaccines against COVID-19 do feature the usage of new technology, however that technology has been studied in detail and perfected for many decades in other fields. It is thanks to the unprecedented effort of the scientific community, the finances dedicated to the research and development efforts, and the staggering amount of volunteers (at least 40 thousand people) that took part in the clinical trials that the vaccines met the safety and efficiency criteria required for successful registration with the European Medicines Agency

(EMA). To this day, there has not been a single vaccine whose registration by the EMA has been taken back due to verifiable severe side-effects. All vaccines remain in circulation.

## ***What are the side-effects of the vaccine?***

- The side-effects of this vaccine aren't any different from those of most other vaccines. The most common side-effects are swelling and pain in the area of the shot, fatigue, headaches, muscle aches, or an increased temperature. These symptoms usually subside in a couple of hours, max. 1-2 days. Side-effects are proof that the vaccine works and that the body is building the appropriate immune response. Even though side-effects can be uncomfortable, it is better to overcome the side-effects of the vaccine than overcoming COVID-19 itself. You can have a severe case of COVID-19 upon contracting it and in the worst-case scenario, die.

## ***How do I differentiate between the potential side-effects of the vaccine and COVID-19 symptoms?***

- The most common side-effects are swelling and pain in the area of the shot, fatigue, headaches, muscle aches, or an increased temperature. These symptoms should subside in a couple of hours, maximum in 1-2 days. If the side-effects continue to persist and/or turn into respiratory difficulty symptoms, immediately contact your doctor.

## ***What if the efficacy of the vaccine and how long is immunity guaranteed for?***

- Given that the first people to receive their second dose of the vaccine only got it a couple of months ago, we do not have a definitive answer to this question yet. We will find out how long immunity lasts and whether getting a vaccine again in the future will be necessary only after enough research and data has been collected. This research is ongoing at the moment. From what we know so far, depending on the age and other factors, antibody immunity lasts for at least a couple of months with cellular immunity projected to last even longer.

### ***Does the vaccine contain the COVID virus?***

- No, the vaccine itself does not contain the live virus and thus cannot cause COVID-19 infection.

### ***If I receive a positive COVID-19 test after vaccination, is it possible that I got infected as a result of the vaccine?***

- No. The vaccine does not contain the live virus and thus it cannot cause a COVID-19 infection. If you receive a positive COVID-19 test after vaccination it means that you got infected by someone before the vaccine was administered or in between the first and second dose of the vaccine.

### ***If I get vaccinated, will I be a potential risk to those who have not yet gotten their shot?***

- No. The vaccine does not contain the live virus and thus it cannot cause a COVID-19 infection.

### ***If I get vaccinated, can I still transmit COVID-19? Will I need to keep wearing a mask?***

- No. The vaccine does not contain the live virus and thus it cannot cause a COVID-19 infection. A person becomes immune to COVID-19 approximately 10-14 days after they receive the second dose of the vaccine. Before then, it is still possible to get infected, and thus it is recommended to maintain public health measures like wearing a mask, social distancing, and washing your hands. Before the desired level of collective immunity is achieved, it will be necessary to maintain these public health measures even after vaccination.

### ***Can I endanger those closest to me who have not gotten their vaccine yet after I get my shot?***

- No. The vaccine does not contain the live virus and thus it cannot cause a COVID-19 infection. A person becomes immune to COVID-19 approximately 10-14 days after they receive the second dose of the vaccine. Before then, it is still possible to get infected, and thus it is recommended to

maintain public health measures like wearing a mask, social distancing, and washing your hands. Before the desired level of collective immunity is achieved, it will be necessary to maintain these public health measures even after vaccination.

### ***If I get an Ag/PCR test done after vaccination, is there a possibility I will get a false positive?***

- No. The vaccine does not contain a detectable trace of the virus. A PCR test detects the relevant virus nucleic acid from the taken sample. An antigen test on the other hand detects the presence of the virus protein in the sample (most antigen tests used in Slovakia react to the N virus protein). After vaccination, the cells surrounding the area of the shot will produce the so-called S (spike) protein. These however will not reach the nasal area from which both PCR and antigen samples are taken from. A full immune response will kick-in only a couple of weeks after you receive the second dose of the vaccine. Until then, it is still possible to get infected so to rule out a COVID-19 infection we still recommend getting tested if necessary.

### ***What are the potential long-term side effects?***

- The safety of the vaccine was tested on a sample of at least 30 000 people in various countries around the world. Publicly available clinical trial data shows that serious side-effects have been reported rarely and with deaths occurring in exceptionally rare cases. The causality of their occurrence with the vaccine is regularly evaluated. Tens of millions of people have already received their vaccine against COVID-19 and it remains safe in the eyes of public health officials. The vaccines continue to be monitored and assessed by an independent board of experts. If any repeated severe side-effects were documented, the vaccine can be adjusted or removed from circulation entirely.

# Vaccination process and the need to get tested before and after

## ***When will I be eligible to get the vaccine?***

- In Slovakia, the vaccination process is carried out according to the approved National Vaccination Strategy of the Ministry of Health. It has divided the vaccination into 11 phases, it is re-evaluated according to the current epidemiological situation and the availability of vaccines. Launch of the new application form has changed the way people can book an appointment for their vaccination. There has been added the role of waiting person which allows to wait for the free vaccination site and date in the Waiting Room. The terms are distributed based on the applicant's age. You can find the current status of which groups are allowed to register for vaccination at <https://korona.gov.sk/vakcinacia/>.

## ***Is it necessary to consult getting vaccinated with my doctor?***

- If you are generally in good health condition, it is not necessary to consult your doctor before getting the vaccine. However, if you are being treated for any chronic illness, suffer from strong allergies, or are pregnant and/or breastfeeding, we recommend consulting getting the vaccine with your doctor.

## ***How does the vaccination process itself work?***

- The currently registered vaccines available in Slovakia are applied via an injection to your forearm. The vaccine consists of two doses, with a 3-4 week break between them. The length of the break depends on the specific type of vaccine you receive. You will receive a vaccine from the same company upon both doses.

## ***How long does vaccination take?***

- The process of administering the vaccine itself takes around 20 minutes. After getting your shot, you will be taken to a specific area and monitored for 15 minutes. The second dose of the vaccine should be administered 21 to 28 days after your first shot, based on the specific vaccine that you received. A person becomes immune to COVID-19 approximately 10-14 days after their second shot of the vaccine. The entire process thus lasts approximately 6 weeks.

## ***How can I register to get the vaccine?***

- The registration form is available on the website [korona.gov.sk](https://korona.gov.sk). Registration is available for various members of the population in line with the National Vaccination Strategy of the Ministry of Health in Slovakia.

## ***I registered for the vaccine, but I cannot come at the designated time. How can I change my appointment?***

- Changes in appointments must be made through the registration form: <https://vakcinacia.nczisk.sk/zmena>

## ***Can I get a vaccine if I have been in contact with someone who is COVID-19 positive?***

- No. Based on current pandemic regulations, all those who have come in contact with a person positive for COVID-19 must immediately quarantine and go get tested as soon as possible.

## ***When is the right time to get the second dose of the vaccine?***

- The timing between the first and second dose is 28 days for Pfizer / BioNTech or Moderna vaccines and 10 weeks for AstraZeneca so that the first dose does not lose in efficacy. You will be automatically informed of the date of your second dose appointment after receiving the first dose.

***Do I need to avoid people between the first and second dose of the disease? Can I get infected between the two doses?***

- Even though the risk of infection decreases even after the first dose, one can still get infected before getting the second dose. It is thus crucial to remain vigilant and follow all known public safety measures like wearing a mask, social distancing, and washing your hands. Upon getting vaccinated, a person cannot be suffering from any inflammatory disease. Thus, if you do get infected with COVID-19 after your first dose and before the second dose of the vaccine, it is necessary to wait at least a week if you are asymptomatic and two weeks from when symptoms begin to subside if you are symptomatic before getting the second shot of the vaccine.

***Is it necessary to get an antigen or PCR test before getting the vaccine?***

- No testing is necessary before getting the vaccine. The only relevant factor is a good health condition, meaning you cannot have any other indicated illness or infection upon getting vaccinated.

***Will I get tested for COVID on-site before getting the vaccine?***

- No testing is necessary before getting the vaccine.

***Is it necessary to get an antibody test before vaccination?***

- No testing is necessary before getting the vaccine.

***Will it be necessary to get another vaccine after some time (for example 2 years)?***

- In light of the fact that the first people to receive their second dose of the vaccine only did so a couple of months ago, we do not have a definitive answer to this question yet. We will find out how long immunity lasts and whether getting a vaccine again in the future will be necessary only after a sufficient amount of research and data has been collected. This research is ongoing at the moment. From what we know

so far, depending on the age and other factors, antibody immunity lasts for at least a couple of months with cellular immunity projected to last even longer.

***Can I get vaccinated against a different disease while getting the COVID-19 vaccine?***

- No. We recommend avoiding any other vaccination at least 2 weeks before and after getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

***Will I need to attend potential mass testing if I am already vaccinated?***

- COVID-19 testing does not apply to individuals who are at least 14 days after vaccination with the second dose of Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccine or 4 weeks after vaccination with the first dose of AstraZeneca.

***Can I drive a person I do not share a household with to get the vaccine?***

- Given the current epidemiological situation, it is recommended that we do not come into physical contact with people we don't share a household with.

# Vaccine efficiency and immunity duration

## ***Will I be immune against COVID-19 immediately after my 1st dose of the vaccine?***

- No. A person becomes immune against COVID-19 approximately 10-14 days after receiving their second dose of the vaccine. Before then it is still possible to get infected, which is why it is necessary to wear a mask, socially distance, and wash your hands regularly even after the first dose. However, until the required level of collective immunity is achieved, it will be necessary to maintain these public safety measures even after vaccination.

## ***How long does immunity after vaccination last?***

- Given that the first people to receive their second dose of the vaccine only did so a couple of months ago, we do not have a definitive answer to this question yet. We will find out how long immunity lasts and whether getting a vaccine again in the future will be necessary only after enough research and data has been collected. This research is ongoing at the moment. From what we know so far, depending on the age and other factors, antibody immunity lasts for at least a couple of months with cellular immunity projected to last even longer.

## ***Is it true that if only 60% of the population gets vaccinated, the vaccine as a whole will not be effective, and the virus can continue spreading?***

- If only 60% of the population gets vaccinated, the incidence of the spread of COVID-19 should be significantly reduced. That being said, safety measures limiting a return to normal life will still likely be needed, as individual cases and outbreaks will still occur. The only way to stop the pandemic is through collective immunity. In order to protect people who will not get vaccinated due to medical reasons or

otherwise, at least 70 to 75% of the population needs to get vaccinated.

## ***What level of collective immunity do we need to be able to live as we did before the pandemic?***

- The only way how to stop the pandemic is through collective immunity. This is because thanks to collective immunity, even those who are not vaccinated have a certain level of protection. To be able to protect those who won't be vaccinated for medical or other reasons, we need to get as many people vaccinated as possible. In number terms that is at least 70-75% of the population.

## ***What is the efficiency of the vaccine against the new mutated versions of the virus? The British, Brazilian, South-African...***

- Based on available data, the vaccine is also effective against the new, more transmissible strains of the coronavirus. Mutated strains of the virus are not a relevant reason to not get vaccinated and thus we still highly recommend getting the vaccine.

## ***Will the vaccine be effective against potential future new mutations of the virus?***

- Based on available data, the vaccine should also be effective against other new, more transmissible future strains of the coronavirus. Upon detection of every new mutation, the efficacy of the vaccine will be studied and measured.

# Vaccines available in Slovakia

## **What vaccines are available in Slovakia?**

- At the moment, the mRNA vaccines (that from the BioNTech/Pfizer consortium and that from Moderna) and so-called vector vaccine from AstraZeneca are available in Slovakia. Janssen vaccine and Sputnik V should also be available in the future.

## **There are 2 vaccines currently available in Slovakia – from Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca. What are the differences between them?**

- To put it simply, vaccines from Moderna and Pfizer do not differ in the way they teach the body how to identify and kill the virus, thus protecting the body from the disease in similar ways. Both are based on the mRNA principle. In addition to mRNA vaccines, there is also a so-called vector vaccine from AstraZeneca currently available. From a safety point of view, all vaccines are comparably safe. Clinical trials have shown that mRNA vaccines are more effective than the AstraZeneca vector vaccine, but the latter is also highly effective in reducing the risk of severe COVID-19, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19.

## **Will the vaccine alter my DNA?**

- No, there is no reason to fear something like this. The vaccine contains mRNA that is different from DNA. mRNA from the vaccine cannot enter the nucleus in any way and thus cannot re-write or change your DNA.

## **I heard that the vaccines ordered by some countries such as Brazil are only 50% effective. How can I be sure that's not the case with the vaccine I will receive?**

- Only vaccines successfully registered with the European Medicines Agency (EMA) are available in Slovakia, thus guaranteeing a high level of safety and efficiency.

## **Which vaccine is more suitable?**

- It is not important which type of vaccine a person will receive. All vaccines available in our country have similar safety and efficacy. In Slovakia, vaccination is carried out according to the valid vaccination plan which is re-evaluated depending on the epidemiological situation and the availability of vaccines.

## **Can I choose which vaccine brand I get?**

- No. The currently available vaccine will be administered upon your appointment. Slovakia will be administering only those vaccines that have successfully passed the registration process of the European Medicines Agency (EMA). Thus, the maximum safety and efficiency of all registered vaccines is guaranteed.

## **How do the currently available vaccines interact with the new COVID-19 mutations?**

- Based on the currently available information, all registered vaccines continue to maintain their efficiency even against the new virus mutations. New mutations of the virus are not a relevant reason to not get vaccinated and we still recommend doing so.



# Who is vaccination suitable for

## **Who should get vaccinated?**

- In principle, every single adult above 18 should get vaccinated. If you are being treated for a chronic illness, suffer from severe allergies, or are pregnant/breastfeeding, please consult getting the vaccine with your doctor prior to the appointment. Vaccination guidelines for children should be available from autumn onwards.

## **Should I get vaccinated even if I have antibodies?**

- Getting a vaccine makes sense even if someone has already overcome COVID-19. Every individual has a different immuno-response and at the moment, we do not have sufficient information about how long immunity lasts after overcoming the virus. Thus, getting a vaccine is still the most reliable form of future prevention. Only a vaccine can ensure a robust and uniform level of protection for everyone.

## **Should I get vaccinated even if I have already overcome COVID-19? If so, when should I get the vaccine?**

- Getting a vaccine makes sense even if someone has already overcome COVID-19. Every individual has a different immuno-response and at the moment, we do not have sufficient information about how long immunity lasts after overcoming the virus. Thus, getting a vaccine is still the most reliable form of future prevention. Only a vaccine can ensure a robust and uniform level of protection for everyone. Vaccination is recommended earliest 2 weeks after overcoming the disease (four weeks after the onset of the infection or 4 weeks after the first positive PCR test for those who are asymptomatic).

## **Do you recommend that the elderly also get vaccinated or is it risky due to their high age?**

- The elderly are one of the most vulnerable groups in terms of COVID-19, so vaccination is extremely important. This is why they are next in line to get the vaccine after health workers and paramedics. People over the ages of 65 and even 85 have been included in clinical trials to study the safety and effectiveness of vaccines. There were no fluctuations in this demographic group compared to the other monitored groups. Even older groups even had milder side effects than other control groups. Therefore, we highly recommend that the elderly get vaccinated and we call on all relatives to motivate and encourage them to take this step.

## **Should I get the vaccine if I am pregnant or plan to get pregnant?**

- At the moment, there isn't sufficient data available for all developed vaccines to be able to answer this question. We recommend consulting the issue with your doctor in this case. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists for example recommends that pregnant women do get the vaccine when eligible.

## **Should I get vaccinated if I am breastfeeding?**

- At the moment, there isn't sufficient data available for all developed vaccines to be able to answer this question. We recommend consulting the issue with your doctor in this case. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists for example recommends that pregnant women do get the vaccine when eligible.

**For which diagnoses or associated diseases is vaccination not recommended?**

- Vaccination is not recommended for people who have displayed a severe or life-threatening allergic reaction after any other vaccination in the past. The vaccine is also not recommended if you suffer from a bleeding disorder or have a very weak or compromised immune system, perhaps as a result of a prior severe infection. In case of any doubts, please consult getting the vaccine with your doctor.

**Do children need to get vaccinated as well and if so, from what age?**

- Currently available vaccines are intended for adults and adolescents from the age of 16. However, in Slovakia, it is recommended to vaccinate from 18 and above. The suitability for a given demographic group is assessed on a test sample in every clinical trial. In addition to adults, it was the elderly and other vulnerable groups of the population that were an important group for studying the COVID-19 vaccines. Clinical studies amongst a younger demographic are currently underway and the recommendations for children will be additionally supplied over time.

## #YesToVaccines

**SO THAT  
I CAN...**



**ENJOY COFFEE TOGETHER  
AGAIN VISIT  
OUR CLIENTS ENJOY THE  
CHRISTMAS PARTY  
WITH OUR COLLEAGUES**

TALK TO COLLEAGUES

WITHOUT A FACE MASK ON

**NETWORK** GO WORK ON  
A PROJECT ABROAD  
**AT CONFERENCES**

PLAY FOOTBALL WITH COLLEAGUES

AFTER WORK **BE SURE I DON'T LOSE  
MY JOB**

# SO THAT I CAN...



*...be sure I don't lose my job*



You can find many more answers to questions related to the vaccine at [www.ZaockujemSa.sk](http://www.ZaockujemSa.sk)

## #YesToVaccines

This brochure was created by:

**#KtoPomozeSlovensku**

