Why should I get vaccinated?
Vaccination is our most powerful tool to end the pandemic. The vaccines give you strong protection from getting COVID and even greater protection from serious illness, hospitalization and death from the virus. They also appear to significantly reduce the spread of COVID. Once a large majority of people are vaccinated, this will make things safe enough so we can return to a more normal way of life.

Are the vaccines safe?
Yes. Although the vaccines were developed in record time, they have gone through the same rigorous Food and Drug Administration (FDA) process as every other vaccine, meeting all safety standards. No steps were skipped. In fact, the state of California added another step by creating its own safety-review committee. Millions of people have been safely vaccinated around the world already.

What are the vaccines' side effects?
People have some mild short-term side effects after being vaccinated, such as swelling at the injection site, fatigue, headache or fever. This is a normal sign that your body is building protection. Severe allergic reactions are rare, occurring in 2-5 people per 1 million doses given. Those reactions are usually immediate and easily treated.

How do the vaccines work?
The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines use messenger RNA (mRNA) to teach the body’s cells to produce antibodies to protect you from COVID. Both of these vaccines require two doses. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is what is called a “viral vector vaccine.” It uses a modified version of a different (and harmless) virus to deliver important instructions to our cells to fight infections. At the end of the process, our bodies learn how to protect us against future infection with the virus that causes COVID-19. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine only requires one dose.

Can the vaccines actually infect me with COVID?
No. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines do not contain live viruses that could cause infection. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine does not use the virus that causes COVID, but a different virus harmless to humans that teaches the body how to defend against COVID.
How long will I be protected after I’m vaccinated?
Health experts don’t know the answer to this yet, but will be monitoring and evaluating health outcomes to learn the answer. It could be that the COVID-19 vaccine is like the measles vaccine and will offer lifetime protection or it could be more like the flu vaccine and people will need to get vaccinated every year.

If I already had COVID-19, do I still need to get vaccinated?
Yes, you should be vaccinated regardless of whether you already had COVID-19. That’s because experts do not yet know how long you are protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. The COVID-19 vaccines appear to give stronger and more long-lasting protection than most COVID-19 infections. Vaccination provides you with an extra level of protection.

Isn’t natural immunity better than vaccinated immunity?
It is sometimes true that “natural immunity” – immunity gained after having recovered from an infection – sufficiently protects someone from getting sick again from the same virus. The price is that you have to suffer and survive the disease first. With COVID, there are still many unknowns. As we mentioned, experts do not yet know how long you are protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. From what we have seen, the natural immune response after a mild case of COVID appears to be short lived, and much shorter than what is expected from the vaccine.

Will the vaccine make me infertile or cause a miscarriage?
There is no evidence that fertility problems are a side effect of any vaccine, including COVID-19 vaccines. If you are pregnant, you may choose to get vaccinated when it’s available to you. There is currently no evidence that antibodies formed from COVID-19 vaccination cause any problem with pregnancy, including the development of the placenta. On the other hand, getting infected with COVID while pregnant can be dangerous to you and your baby. Vaccination will help protect both of you.

Will the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines alter my DNA?
No. The mRNA vaccines made by Pfizer and Moderna do not change or interact with your DNA in any way. mRNA vaccines teach our cells how to make a protein that triggers an immune response to fight COVID. The mRNA from a COVID-19 vaccine never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA is kept.