

# Vaccines

## What they are and how they can save your life

Vaccines are a breakthrough of modern medicine – and are the best protection we have against many serious illnesses. The World Health Organization estimates that vaccines can save between 2 and 3 million lives every year.<sup>1</sup>

### What is a vaccine?

Vaccines are a safe and effective way of protecting people against diseases and illnesses. When you get a vaccine, your immune system will develop resistance to that disease. You typically get a vaccine as a shot, but some can also be given as a nasal spray you inhale or a medication you drink.

### How do vaccines work?

When you get a vaccine, your body will produce antibodies against that disease, usually after about two weeks. Antibodies are proteins produced naturally by your immune system to fight disease. Your body will then be able to recognize and fight the disease if you're ever exposed to it later. This can significantly lower the impact of a disease or prevent you from catching it.

### Why should I get vaccinated?

Vaccines are a safe way to prevent disease and save lives. Plus, they can protect you against a disease for a year, decades, or even a lifetime – depending on the specific disease. That's what makes vaccines so powerful. Rather than treating a disease after you get it, vaccines prevent you from getting sick in the first place.

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1. "Vaccines and Immunization: What Is Vaccination," World Health Organization, December 31, 2020, [www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/vaccines-and-immunization-what-is-vaccination](http://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/vaccines-and-immunization-what-is-vaccination).

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## What you need to know about the flu and COVID-19 vaccines

### Why do I need both the flu and COVID-19 vaccines?

The flu shot doesn't protect against COVID-19, just as the COVID-19 vaccine doesn't protect against the flu. Each vaccine can help reduce illness, hospitalization, and death from its respective virus only.

### Is it safe to get a COVID-19 vaccine and flu shot at the same time?

Yes, current CDC guidance recommends that it's safe to get the COVID-19 vaccine and flu shot at the same time.

### How can I learn more about the COVID-19 booster?

Please visit [kp.org/covidvaccine](https://kp.org/covidvaccine) for the latest booster information.

### Why do I need a flu shot every year?

Flu viruses change each year. New flu vaccines are created every year to fight the latest virus. Plus, the immunity you get from a flu shot only lasts about a year.

### Is it safe for pregnant people to get the flu shot or COVID-19 vaccine?

We recommend that people who are pregnant or considering becoming pregnant get a COVID-19 vaccine. Experts believe that, based on how each of these vaccines works in the body, none of the authorized vaccines are likely to pose a specific risk for people who are pregnant. The same is true for flu shots, which help protect both the pregnant parent and the baby from flu. Vaccination has been shown to reduce the risk of flu-associated acute respiratory infection in pregnant people by up to one-half. As always, we encourage you to talk with your care team if you have questions or concerns.

### Is there a cost for the flu or COVID-19 vaccine?

No. The flu shot is provided to members at no cost at Kaiser Permanente facilities. COVID-19 vaccine doses were purchased with taxpayer dollars and are required by the federal government to be given at no cost.