



COVID-19 Vaccination Toolkit

FAQ with Dr. Choo & Dr. Safo



Esther Choo, MD, MPH

Dr. Esther Choo is an emergency medicine physician and a Professor at Oregon Health & Science University. She is a popular health communicator who writes for publications like NBC Think and Self magazine and appears as a medical expert on CNN and MSNBC.



Stella Safo, MD

Dr. Stella Safo is an HIV primary care physician in New York City and an Assistant Professor at Mount Sinai Health System. She is a founding member of several organizations dedicated to gender and racial equity and to civic engagement in medicine, including Equity Now at Mount Sinai, VoteHealth 2020, and the Coalition to Advance Antiracism in Medicine.

What side effects can we expect from the COVID-19 vaccines?

- Side effects after getting the vaccine are normal and expected—they mean that **the body is building protection against COVID-19**. They can happen with any of the three vaccines being used in the US.
- Side effects may feel like the flu, but should go away in a few days. Most common side effects are:
 - ▶ Pain or swelling on the arm where you received the vaccine
 - ▶ Chills
 - ▶ Fever
 - ▶ Tiredness
 - ▶ Headache
- A small number of people have had a severe allergic reaction (“anaphylaxis”) shortly after vaccination, but this is very rare. If it does happen, the vaccination site has medicines available to effectively and immediately treat the reaction.
- You will be asked to stay for 15–30 minutes after you get the vaccine so you can be observed and provided treatment in the rare case it is needed.

Should grandparents get the vaccine?

It’s especially important that older adults get the vaccine. Older adults are more likely to get sick with COVID-19, are more likely to have medical conditions that put them at risk for getting seriously ill, and may come into contact with the virus unknowingly while they care for children and other family members.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe during pregnancy and nursing?

- There is **no data** that supports the claim that COVID-19 vaccines cause infertility or are unsafe during pregnancy.
- The vaccine does not contain live virus, and **cannot cause infection in the mother, fetus, or nursing babies.**
- The proteins used in the vaccine do not change DNA or genetic material.
- There is no evidence that the antibodies formed in response to the vaccine will affect the placenta or cause any other problems in pregnancy.
- The COVID vaccines are like other vaccines that are given to people who want to get pregnant or who are pregnant to keep them safe and healthy.

When will children be able to get the vaccine?

- Vaccines were first tested in adults and older children
- Medical researchers are now studying the vaccine in children as young as 6 months old
- Children of all ages may be able to get the vaccine later in 2021 or in early 2022.
- Until then, keep children safe by having them wear masks when around others and avoid crowded indoor gatherings.

Sources:

- NYC Health + Hospitals [COVID-19 Vaccine Facts](#)
- The Conversation: [Between Us, About Us](#)
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) [COVID-19 vaccines page](#)



Find the full **COVID-19 Vaccination Toolkit** series at go.nhsa.org/sleeve-up.
Questions? Ideas? E-mail us at vaccines@nhsa.org