COVID Vaccine Side Effects and Hepatitis C and Liver Disease

Many with hep C or another liver disease have questions about what the side effects of COVID vaccines might be.

March 25, 2021 By Connie M. Welch

Common Questions About Vaccine Side Effects

Every person's vaccine side effect experience can be slightly different, but remember, side effects are brief. Side effects are common and mean your immune system is working. Protection from the virus and its severity is a great benefit.

If I have hepatitis C, cirrhosis, or had a liver transplant, is the vaccine safe for me?

If you have hepatitis C, cirrhosis, or had a liver transplant, consult with your doctor before receiving the vaccine. Each person's medical condition and medication they take are different. In general, there are no reports of problems with those receiving the vaccine who have liver disease.

What if I am currently doing treatment for hepatitis C, should I get vaccinated during treatment?

This is a great question, your liver specialist would need to clear you before taking the vaccine. They may recommend you wait until after your treatment is completed. Do not stop or alter your hepatitis C treatment in any way unless your doctor advises you to do so.

Why is it necessary to have two vaccine shots?

The first shot is like priming the pump to ramp up your immune system. The second shot is needed to complete the immune response and give you the protection that is necessary.

What are the side effects of the vaccine?

There are similar side effects from all 3 Covid vaccines. Side effects can differ per person. General side effects listed are soreness at the injection site, fatigue, headache, muscle aches, chills, joint pain, and mild fever.

The most common side effects reported are soreness at the injection site, mild muscle aches, and fatigue.

How long do side effects last?

Side effects generally do not appear until eight to 12 hours after the second vaccine shot and can last 24 to 48 hours, possibly up to three days. Most common side effects are reported to only last 24 to 48 hours.

Can you get COVID-19 from the vaccine?

No. You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine. It is not made from the COVID-19 virus. Pfizer and Moderna are made using mRNA technology, which teaches the immune system to target the virus surface preventing infection.

The Johnson and Johnson vaccine is made a little differently in that it teaches the immune system to attack the protein the virus uses to infect other cells. The instructions are carried by a non-dangerous virus.

Are side effects more severe for those who are high risk or have health conditions or older?

No. The vaccine side effects, in general, have been less frequent and mild in those 55 and older.

What I take to help with side effects?

It is recommended to take Ibuprofen or Tylenol to help relieve muscle aches and fever. Drink plenty of water to help keep you hydrated. Rest and take naps as needed.

Having meals prepared ahead or eating something light and easy can be helpful if you experience fatigue. Side effects from the vaccine are temporary and generally pass within 24 to 48 hours.

If I am vaccinated, does this mean I won't get COVID-19?

No vaccine is 100% effective. Vaccination does not guarantee you could not get COVID. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are 95% effective and help protect you from having a severe case. The Johnson and Johnson vaccine is 66% effective.

Could I still get COVID in between the first and second shot?

Yes, unfortunately, you are still at high risk of getting COVID after the first shot because you do not have complete protection until after your second shot. It is recommended you continue to wear face masks and practice social distancing and all safety precautions.

Can I stop wearing my face mask and have close contact with people after I get the vaccine?

After you are vaccinated with the second shot it takes approximately 7 to 14 days for the vaccine to become fully effective and give you the protection you need. During this time and even after 7 to 14 days, it is recommended to practice safety precautions such as wearing masks, wash hands often, practice social distancing until at least 70% of the population is vaccinated to achieve herd

immunity.

If I have hepatitis C, or another liver disease condition or liver transplant, are there any side effect complications resulting from the vaccine?

There are no reports of any liver-related health complications from the vaccine. It is best to consult with your hepatologist, gastroenterologist, infectious disease doctor, or transplant team about your specific condition and the vaccine.

If you are over 55 years of age and have a health condition, you are at risk of severe complications from COVID. People of all ages can contract or be a carrier of COVID. The COVID vaccine is recommended to give you the protection to keep you safe. Talk to your doctor about the vaccine and your medical condition.

Get vaccinated. Be safe. Stay steady. Finish well.

Do you have a question about side effects of the COVID vaccine?

Share your comments below.

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