

Share Answers About mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines

Patients will turn to you for **evolving COVID-19 vaccine details**.

Share facts...and help dispel misconceptions.

The mRNA vaccines, from Pfizer-BioNTech (BNT162b2) and Moderna (mRNA-1273), give our cells an mRNA blueprint to make a piece of the SARS-CoV-2 “spike” protein. This triggers an immune response.

The mRNA is then quickly broken down. It doesn't affect our DNA.

Educate that these aren't live vaccines...they don't use whole or partial pathogens...and they can't cause COVID-19 infection.

Vaccines using an “mRNA platform” have been studied for over a decade for conditions such as cancer, influenza, MERS, and more.

And COVID-19 vaccine trials are large, similar to other vaccines.

Clarify why these vaccines became available quickly. Some steps occurred simultaneously...but none were skipped. For instance, manufacturing began while waiting for trial results.

Address efficacy questions. Early data suggest the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine has roughly 95% efficacy against COVID-19 after 2 IM doses of the same product...separated by 21 or 28 days.

For example, Pfizer-BioNTech data over about 2 months show 162 symptomatic, confirmed COVID-19 cases in the placebo group versus 8 in the vaccinated group...in more than 43,000 people age 16 and up.

Point out that with broader use, we'll learn more about real-world effectiveness...such as how long immunity lasts.

And stay tuned for data about whether vaccinated patients can still develop asymptomatic COVID-19 and spread the virus. For now, continue to emphasize wearing masks, distancing, etc...even AFTER vaccination.

Tell patients to expect injection site pain...and flu-like symptoms (fatigue, aches, etc), which seem more likely after the second dose.

Explain these should go away in a couple days...and remind patients that these can be signs the immune system is working.

Be aware, emergency use authorization (EUA) for COVID-19 vaccines expedites access...but FDA still requires safety and efficacy data in line with what's needed for eventual approval. The bar for vaccine EUAs is higher than the one set for COVID-19 treatments.

Address hesitancy with our chart, Communicating About COVID-19 Vaccination. Get our COVID-19 Vaccines chart for storage, doses, etc.

Key References:

-N Engl J Med Published online Dec 10, 2020; doi:10.1056/NEJMoa2034577

-N Engl J Med 2020;383(20):1920-31

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-www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/hcp/index.html (12-21-20)

-www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/covid-19-vaccines (12-21-20)

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