mRNA Vaccines and You
2025-2026

#GET VACCINATED

What's an mRNA Vaccine?

An **mRNA vaccine** teaches your body how to protect itself from a virus — without using any live virus. It works like a short set of instructions that tell your cells to make a harmless piece of the virus (for example, the "spike protein" from COVID-19). Your immune system sees that piece, learns to fight it, and remembers how — so if the real virus shows up later, your body knows what to do.

- **No live virus** — you can't get sick from the vaccine.
- **No DNA change** — it never touches your genes.
- **No long-term ingredients** — your body breaks it down in a few days.

What Side Effects Are Normal?

Typical short-term reactions include:

- Sore arm or redness where the shot was given
- Tiredness or mild fever
- Headache, chills, or muscle aches

Most people feel fine or just a little off for a day or two.

Think of it like a workout for your immune system — it means your body is building protection.

These symptoms usually go away within 1–3 days. Over-the-counter medicine and rest help.

Rare but Serious Side Effects

Serious problems are very rare — but because healthcare workers like you are trained to notice changes, here's what to know:

- Heart inflammation (myocarditis or pericarditis) — a small number of mostly young men (teens to early 20s) have had chest pain or shortness of breath a few days after vaccination.
    - It happens in a few cases out of a million doses.

    - Most people recover quickly with rest and medicine.
- Severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) — extremely rare (about 5 per million). Clinics are ready with epinephrine just in case.

If you ever have chest pain, shortness of breath, or racing heartbeat after a shot, tell a nurse or doctor right away.

Why the Vaccine Is Worth It — Especially for You

As a healthcare worker, you care for people every day — most importantly your residents are older and those with weak immune systems. mRNA vaccines help protect **you** and **your residents** from severe illness, hospitalization, and long COVID.

Here's why it's safer to get the shot than to risk infection:

Risk	From Vaccine	From Infection
Heart inflammation	Rare (a few per million)	Much higher (dozens per million)
Hospitalization	Extremely rare	Common in unvaccinated adults
Spreading virus to patients	Reduced	Much higher

Getting vaccinated means fewer missed workdays, fewer outbreaks in your facility, and stronger protection for the people who rely on you.

Myths vs. Facts

MYTH	FACT
❌ The vaccine changes your DNA.	✓ The mRNA never enters your DNA.
❌ It was made too fast.	✓ The technology has been studied for over 15 years; it was approved quickly because testing and funding moved faster.
❌ It can cause infertility.	✓ There's no evidence it affects fertility or pregnancy.
❌ If I already had COVID, I don't need it.	✓Natural immunity fades; vaccines boost lasting protection

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The Bottom Line

- mRNA vaccines are proven safe and effective after hundreds of millions of doses.
- Side effects are mostly mild and short-lived.
- Serious reactions are rare and treatable.
- The protection you get helps you, your coworkers, and your patients stay healthy.

By choosing to get vaccinated, you're protecting yourself and everyone you care for.