

## Am I OBLIGED to be vaccinated ?

The freedom to be vaccinated remains total. It is **your decision**. You can seek advice from your attending physician, pharmacist or other trusted healthcare professional. Do not hesitate to discuss any questions you may have with him or her to help you make the best decision for you. The choice not to be vaccinated will be respected. **The vaccine is free of charge.**

## WHO will vaccinate me ?

In view of the vaccine's storage conditions, the vaccination will be carried out in **suitable conditions**. For people with certain health risks, vaccination will be organised as a priority in **vaccination centres**. These centres will then be accessible to the rest of the population.

## Will I be able to resume a 'normal' life ?

Vaccination will not put an end to the COVID-19 pandemic overnight, but it will protect you **almost totally** as soon as you have received the **second dose**.

It is a **complementary mechanism to preventive measures** which must persist in the first instance. However, this will allow the rules of social distancing to be gradually relaxed and certain freedoms to be gradually restored: resumption of activities, reunions with family and friends, leisure activities, etc.

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## TO FIND OUT MORE

This information is made available to you by your **attending physician**, your **pharmacist** or any other **care professional** whom you trust.

The website [jemevaccine.be](https://jemevaccine.be) directs you towards available and scientifically validated information.



# COVID-19

## Should I be vaccinated?

INFORMATION  
intended for patients



## What is a VACCINE for?

When we become ill as a result of an infection, our body's defence system, known as the "**immune system**", fights against the pathogenic agent that causes it (virus, bacteria, etc.). It recognises substances that are characteristic of the pathogen (antigens) and produces substances to neutralise and eliminate it: the **antibodies**.

To be vaccinated is to introduce a pathogenic agent into your body that has been rendered **harmless** or a "well-chosen" piece of pathogen. Our immune system reacts by producing the same antibodies to fight it.

If we are later infected with the "real" pathogen, our immune defences activated by the vaccine can neutralize it and prevent us from getting sick; this is called the "**immune response**".

Since the 19th century, medical research has made it possible to produce numerous vaccines to **protect us from infectious diseases** such as rabies, tetanus, polio, yellow fever, measles, diphtheria, influenza and many others.

## Vaccines against COVID-19

These first vaccines (vaccine from the firms Pfizer and Moderna) available are made up of a molecule called messenger RNA (mRNA) which contains the information for our own bodies to transiently produce the antigen. The antigen will then cause an **immune response** and will produce the **antibodies to destroy the virus**.

For these vaccines, **two doses will be necessary**. The second dose should be injected three weeks after the first dose (21 days) for the Pfizer vaccine and four weeks (28 days) for the Moderna vaccine. These vaccines are very protective against the disease (almost 95 % total protection).

### PRIORITY TO THE MOST VULNERABLE AND EXPOSED PEOPLE

The objective is for at least 70 % of the population to be vaccinated to **ensure herd immunity**. But not everyone can be vaccinated at the same time. On the basis of expert opinion, the High Council of Health has defined the following **priority population groups** and **successive phases** of access to vaccination.

The first phase concerns older people living in nursing homes and the staff of these institutions. Secondly, the most exposed health professionals, staff and residents of collective care structures (disability, mental health, etc.) as well as the people who are most vulnerable in terms of their health. Lastly, the rest of the population.



## WHY should I get vaccinated?

The first reason is to **avoid having COVID-19** which can have serious consequences. This is the most effective way to **protect yourself**. Vaccination will also contribute to **relieving hospital overload**.

Finally, once a large number of people have been vaccinated, we will be able to **resume more normal activities, while initially respecting** the precautionary barrier measures.

## What are the side effects of the COVID-19 vaccination?

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause **transient side effects**: fever, fatigue, headache or a local reaction at the site of the injection (pain, redness, swelling, etc.).

In very rare cases, a more severe reaction (allergy) can also be observed. No other serious or long-lasting adverse events have been detected to date, but since the vaccine is new, this risk can never be completely ruled out.

