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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

THE COVID-19 VACCINE

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Together Against Covid-19

Sources: Harris County Public Health, National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD) - Division of Viral Diseases, and U.S. Food and Drug Administration

UNDERSTANDING

THE COVID-19 VACCINES

Two COVID-19 vaccines have been authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for emergency use. As advancements continue in developing vaccines to fight the virus, it's helpful to understand the similarities and differences between the two vaccines developed by Pfizer and Moderna.

Please note:

- Like all vaccines, before being authorized for emergency use, medical researchers tested the safety and effectiveness of these COVID-19 vaccines.
- Researchers studied the mRNA technology used to develop these vaccines for more than a decade.
- Neither vaccine contains a live virus. No vaccine can infect you with COVID-19.

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Sources: Harris County Public Health and National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases

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PFIZER-BIONTECH

COVID-19 VACCINE

This vaccine is authorized for emergency use in persons aged 16 years and older.

2

Two injection doses, **3 weeks or 21 days apart**

Similar other multi-dose vaccines that have been in use for years, such as vaccines for DPT, HPV, and Hepatitis B.

95%

95% effective preventing COVID-19 infection

16+

Ages 16 and older

Full protection starts **one to two weeks after receiving the second dose**

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Sources: Harris County Public Health and National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases

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MODERNA

COVID-19 VACCINE

This vaccine is authorized for emergency use in persons aged 18 years and older.

Two injection doses, **4 weeks or 28 days apart**

Similar to other multi-dose vaccines that have been in use for years, such as vaccines for DPT, HPV and Hepatitis B.

Ages 18 and older

94.5% effective **after the second dose**

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Sources: Harris County Public Health and National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases

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WHAT TO EXPECT

FROM BOTH VACCINES

The overwhelming majority (85%) of vaccine recipients experience mild to moderate viral symptoms, and 15% get more significant symptoms like fever or chills. These symptoms generally last no more than 24 hours and are typically controlled with over-the-counter medicines.

These symptoms include:

- Pain and/or swelling at the site of the injection
- Fever
- Chills
- Tiredness
- Headache

In most cases, discomfort from fever or pain is normal. Contact your doctor or healthcare provider:

- If you experience rare or less common side effects, like allergic reactions
- If the redness or tenderness where you got the shot increases after 24 hours
- If your side effects are worrying you or do not seem to be going away after a few days

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Sources: Harris County Public Health and National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases

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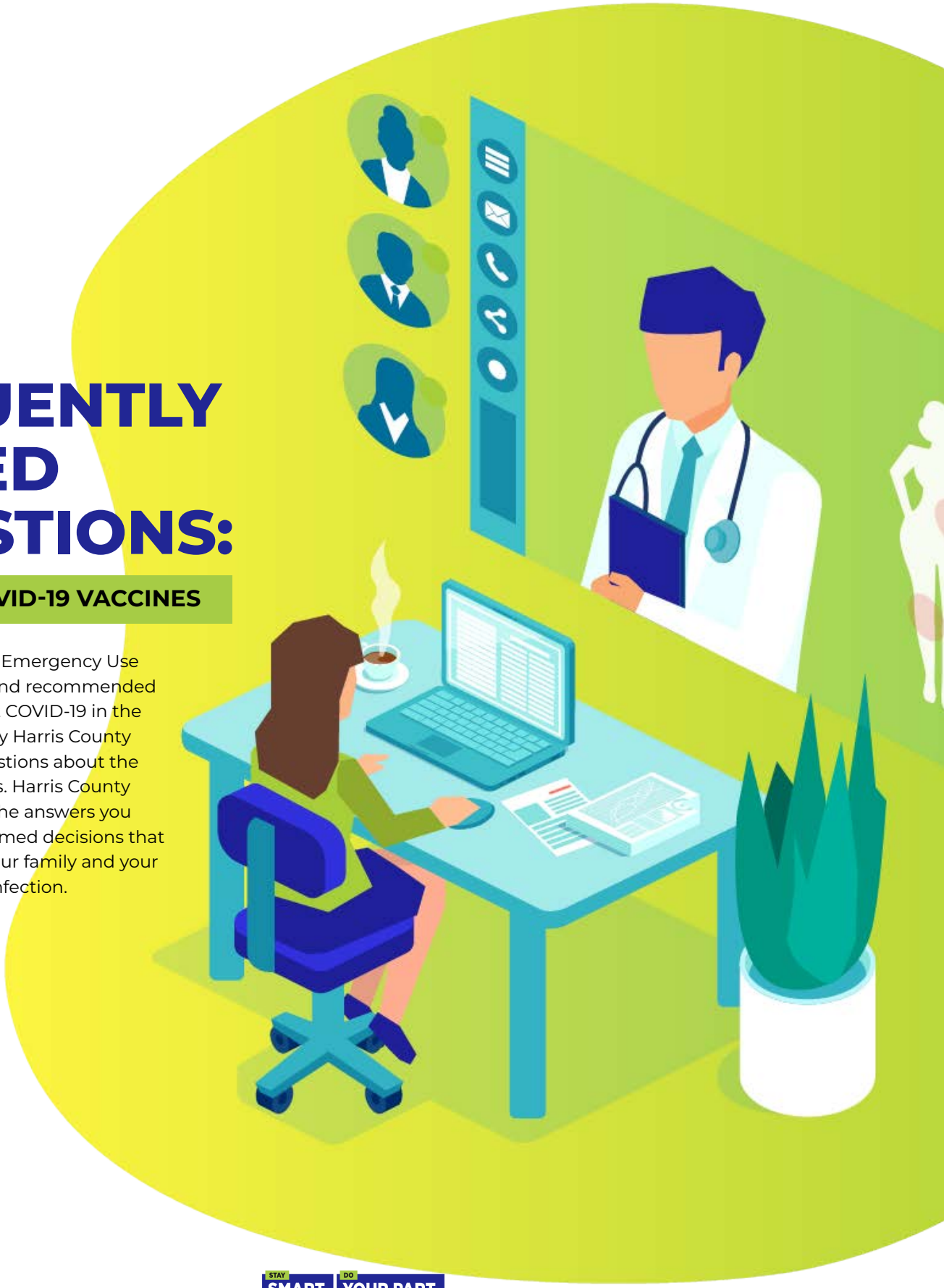
FEQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

COVID-19 VACCINES

Now that there are Emergency Use Authorized (EUA) and recommended vaccines to prevent COVID-19 in the United States, many Harris County residents have questions about the vaccination process. Harris County Public Health has the answers you need to make informed decisions that can help protect your family and your community from infection.



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Sources: Harris County Public Health and National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases

When can my family and I get vaccinated?

There is currently a limited supply of vaccines in the United States. High-risk groups like healthcare workers and long-term care facility residents are the first to receive the vaccine. The goal is for everyone to easily get vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as large enough quantities are available. The vaccine supply will increase in the weeks and months to come. Once vaccines are widely available, the plan is to have several thousand vaccination providers offering COVID-19 vaccines in doctors' offices, retail pharmacies, hospitals, and federally qualified health centers. Harris County Public Health estimates this vaccination plan will be possible by spring 2021. In the meantime, continue to wear a mask, social distance, avoid gatherings and get tested.

Do I have to be a U.S. citizen to be eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccine from Harris County Public Health?

Proof of citizenship, residence, or insurance is not required to get a COVID-19 vaccine administered by Harris County Public Health.

Is the vaccine safe?

The U.S. vaccine safety system ensures that all vaccines are as safe as possible. After thorough testing and authorized for emergency use, the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccine has been shown to be safe and effective for use in people ages ≥16 years as determined by data from the manufacturer and findings from large clinical trials. The use of the vaccine is recommended by healthcare providers around the world.

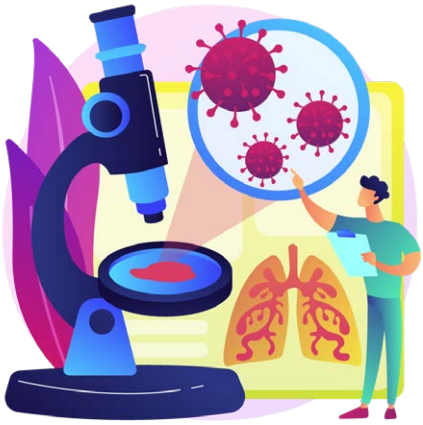
How much does the vaccine cost?

Vaccine doses purchased with U.S. taxpayer dollars will be given to the American people at no cost. However, vaccination providers may be able to charge administration fees for giving the injections. Vaccination providers can get this fee reimbursed by the patient's public or private insurance company or, for uninsured patients, by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund.

Is the vaccine a shot?

The vaccine consists of two separate doses injected 3–4 weeks apart.

Sources: Harris County Public Health and National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases



Do I need to continue wearing a mask and social distancing after I get vaccinated?

Yes. While experts learn more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide under real-life conditions, it will be important for everyone to continue using all the tools available to us to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, including wearing a mask, washing hands, and remaining at least six feet away from others. Together, COVID-19 vaccination and following COVID-19 prevention recommendations will offer the best protection from getting and spreading COVID-19. Experts need to understand more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide before deciding to change recommendations on the steps everyone should take to slow the spread of the virus. Other factors, including how many people get vaccinated and how the virus is spreading in communities, will also affect this decision.

Who is receiving the vaccines and distributing it?

The state of Texas has released the vaccine to Harris County, and we have partnered with over 1,000 organizations to distribute and vaccinate.

How do we know the vaccine works?

The vaccine has been tested thoroughly. Before the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) determines whether to approve a vaccine or authorize a vaccine for emergency use, clinical trials are conducted to determine how well it works. This is known as effectiveness. After the FDA approves a vaccine or authorizes a vaccine for emergency use, it continues to be studied to determine how well it works under real-world conditions. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) and other federal partners will be assessing COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness during the rollout and releasing their finding to the public.

Sources: Harris County Public Health and National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases

COVID-19 VACCINE

MYTHBUSTING

Now that authorized and recommended COVID-19 vaccines are available in the United States, accurate vaccine information is critical. The healthcare experts at Harris County Public Health caution residents to be on the lookout for misinformation about these vaccines. Rely on the advice of licensed healthcare professionals when it comes to your health recommendations. Mass vaccination is our best hope to end the pandemic. Before giving in to fear of a vaccine, let's separate fact from fiction. Most of the myths about COVID-19 vaccination are easily busted!

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Sources: Harris County Public Health and National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases

MYTH:
You will get COVID-19 if you get the vaccine.

FACT:
COVID-19 vaccines will not give you COVID-19.

None of the COVID-19 vaccines currently in development or in use in the United States contain the live virus that causes COVID-19. There are several different types of vaccines in development. However, the goal for each of them is to teach our immune systems how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19. Sometimes this process can cause symptoms, such as fever. These symptoms are normal and are a sign that the body is building immunity. It typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination. That means it's possible a person could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and get sick. This is because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection.

MYTH:
COVID-19 vaccines are not safe because they were developed and tested quickly.

FACT:
The COVID-19 vaccine is proven to be safe.

The pandemic warranted an emergency response and that does not mean pharmaceutical companies bypassed safety protocols or performed inadequate testing. All the COVID-19 vaccines were subjected to large, rigorous clinical trials. Clinical trials of all vaccines must first show they are safe and effective before any vaccine can be authorized or approved for use, including COVID-19 vaccines. The known and potential benefits of a COVID-19 vaccine must outweigh the known and potential risks of the vaccine for use under what is known as an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). The Federal Drug Administration (FDA) authorized the use of the vaccines under EUA.

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Sources: Harris County Public Health and National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases

MYTH:
You will test positive on a COVID-19 viral test if you have been vaccinated.

FACT:
COVID-19 vaccines will not cause you to test positive on COVID-19 viral tests.

The recently authorized and recommended vaccines nor the other COVID-19 vaccines currently in clinical trials in the United States cause you to test positive on viral test. If your body develops an immune response, which is the goal of vaccination, there is a possibility you may test positive on some antibody tests. Antibody tests are not used to determine if you have COVID-19. Antibody tests indicate you had a previous infection and that you may have some level of protection against the virus. Experts are currently looking at how COVID-19 vaccination may affect antibody testing results.

MYTH:
People who have had COVID-19 do not need to get vaccinated.

FACT:
People who have gotten sick with COVID-19 may still benefit from getting vaccinated.

Harris County residents should get a vaccine even if they have been sick with COVID-19 before because of the severe health risks associated with COVID-19. COVID-19 reinfection is possible, and experts do not know how long someone has protection from reinfection after recovering from COVID-19. The immunity someone gains from having an infection, called natural immunity, varies from person to person. Some early evidence suggests natural immunity may not last very long. Experts won't know how long the immunity provided by the vaccine lasts until many people are vaccinated and more data becomes available on how well the vaccine works on a mass scale. They are trying to learn more about both natural immunity and vaccine-induced immunity from COVID-19.

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Sources: Harris County Public Health and National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases

MYTH:
You will never contract COVID-19 if you are vaccinated.

FACT:
Getting vaccinated can help prevent getting sick with COVID-19.

The COVID-19 vaccination helps protect you by creating an antibody response without having to experience sickness. You may need additional vaccination in the future and that vaccination isn't a lifetime cure, but mass vaccination can help end the pandemic. While some people infected with COVID-19 experience only mild symptoms or no symptoms, others experience a severe illness or even die. The vaccine will help reduce your risk of getting COVID-19. There is no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you, even if you are not at increased risk of severe complications. If you get sick, you also may spread the disease to friends, family, and others around you while you are sick.

MYTH:
The mRNA vaccine will have an affect on my DNA.

FACT:
Receiving an mRNA vaccine will not alter your DNA.

mRNA stands for messenger ribonucleic acid and can most easily be described as instructions for your body on how to make a protein or even just a piece of a protein. mRNA is not able to alter or modify a person's genetic makeup (DNA). The mRNA from a COVID-19 vaccine never enter the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA are kept. This means the mRNA does not touch, affect, or interact with our DNA in any way. Instead, COVID-19 vaccines that use mRNA work with the body's natural defenses to safely develop immunity to disease.

Sources: Harris County Public Health and National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases

BENEFITS OF

GETTING THE COVID-19 VACCINE

Discover the benefits of getting the COVID-19 vaccine. The CDC dives into what is currently known and why it's important to get vaccinated.

COVID-19 vaccination will help keep you from getting COVID-19

- All COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States have been shown to be highly effective at preventing COVID-19.
- Based on what we know about vaccines for other diseases and early data from clinical trials, experts believe that getting a COVID-19 vaccine may also help keep you from getting seriously ill even if you do get COVID-19.
- Getting vaccinated yourself may also protect people around you, particularly people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- Experts continue to conduct more studies about the effect of COVID-19 vaccination on severity of illness from COVID-19, as well as its ability to keep people from spreading the virus that causes COVID-19.

COVID-19 vaccination is a safer way to help build protection

- COVID-19 can have serious, life-threatening complications, and there is no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you. And if you get sick, you could spread the disease to friends, family, and others around you.
- Clinical trials of all vaccines must first show they are safe and effective before any vaccine can be authorized or approved for use, including COVID-19 vaccines. The known and potential benefits of a COVID-19 vaccine must outweigh the known and potential risks of the vaccine for use under what is known as an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA).
- Getting COVID-19 may offer some natural protection, known as immunity. Current evidence suggests that reinfection with the virus that causes COVID-19 is uncommon in the 90 days after initial infection. However, experts don't know for sure how long this protection lasts, and the risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 far outweighs any benefits of natural immunity. COVID-19 vaccination will help protect you by creating an antibody (immune system) response without having to experience sickness.
- Both natural immunity and immunity produced by a vaccine are important parts of COVID-19 disease that experts are trying to learn more about, and the CDC will keep the public informed as new evidence becomes available.

COVID-19 vaccination will be an important tool to help stop the pandemic

- Wearing masks and social distancing help reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus or spreading it to others, but these measures are not enough. Vaccines will work with your immune system so it will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed.
- The combination of getting vaccinated and following CDC's recommendations to protect yourself and others will offer the best protection from COVID-19.
- Stopping a pandemic requires using all the tools we have available. As experts learn more about how COVID-19 vaccination may help reduce spread of the disease in communities, CDC will continue to update the recommendations to protect communities using the latest science.

Source: CDC

THE FACTS

ON THE COVID-19 VACCINE

HOW DO VACCINES WORK?

A vaccine trains the immune system to recognize viruses, bacteria, and other germs, or pathogens, so the body can react. The human body produces special proteins called antibodies to fight germs like the virus that causes COVID-19. The COVID-19 vaccines introduce elements that mimic their structure into the body and cause your body to safely develop antibodies that recognize and fight the coronavirus that causes the disease, greatly reducing the risk for full-scale infection.

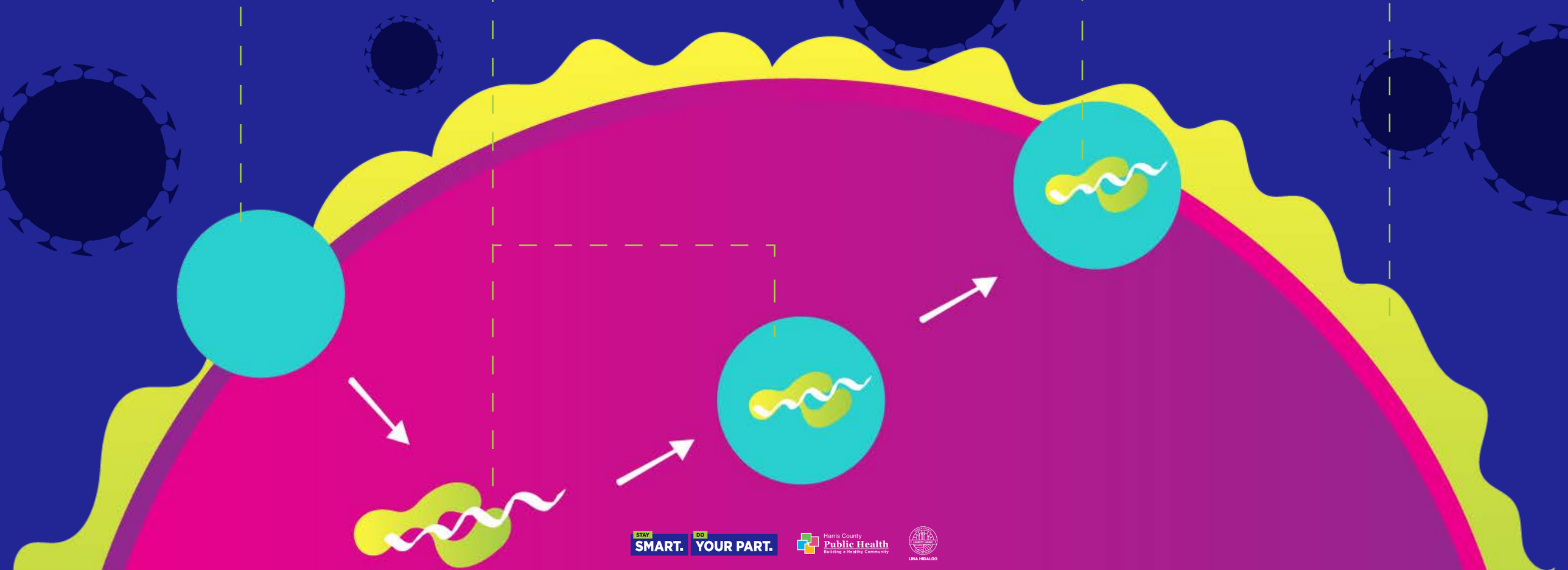
A CLOSER LOOK AT HOW THE COVID-19 VACCINE WORKS:

- COVID-19 mRNA vaccines teaches our cells to make a harmless piece of "spike protein," which is found on the strain, SARS-CoV-2 virus which causes COVID-19.

- Once the instructions (mRNA) are inside the immune cells, the cells use them to make the protein piece. After the protein piece is made, the cell breaks down the instructions and gets rid of them.

- Next, the cell displays the protein piece on its surface. Our immune systems recognize that the protein doesn't belong there and begin building an immune response and making antibodies, like what happens in natural infection against COVID-19.

- At the end of the process, our bodies have learned how to protect against future infection. The benefit of mRNA vaccines, like all vaccines, is those vaccinated gain this protection without ever having to risk the serious consequences of getting sick with COVID-19.



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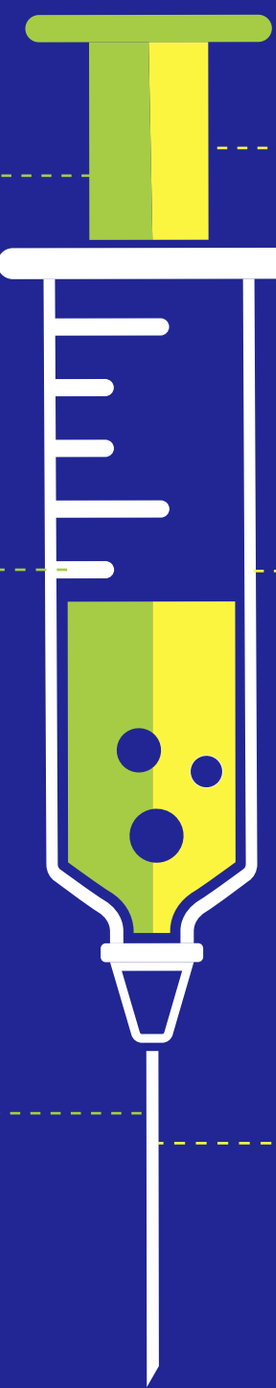
Source: Harris County Public Health, CDC, Texas Department of Health and Safety Services

WHO PARTICIPATED IN CLINICAL TRIALS?

The first two mRNA vaccines in line for FDA authorization were tested in a diverse group of people. About 30 percent of U.S. participants were Hispanic, African American, Asian, and Native American. About half were older adults. There were no significant safety concerns identified in these or any other groups.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE CLINICAL TRIALS:



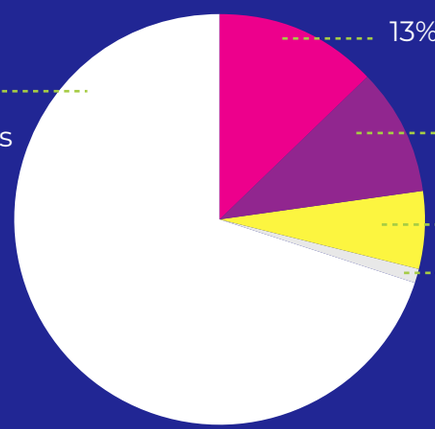
PFIZER/BIONTECH

43,931 enrolled

150 clinical sites around the world

39 clinical sites in the U.S.

RACIAL/ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION



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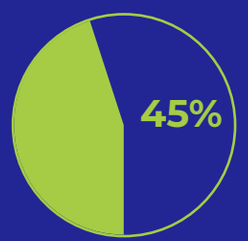


56–85 years old

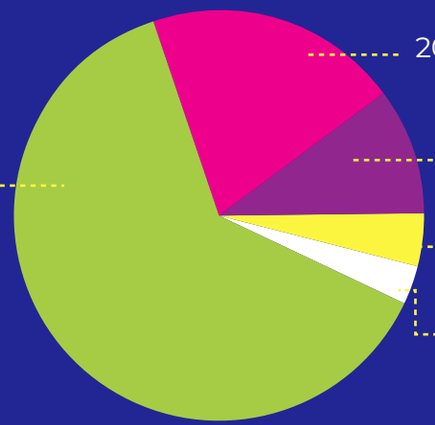
MODERNA

30,000 enrolled

89 clinical sites worldwide

32 clinical sites in the U.S.

RACIAL/ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION



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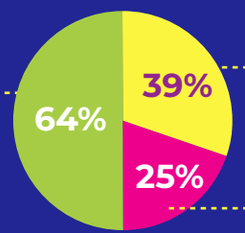

45–64 years old

45 and older

65+

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Source: Harris County Public Health, CDC, Texas Department of Health and Safety Services

WHO'S GETTING THE VACCINE?

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) released guidelines for COVID-19 vaccine allocation. These guidelines serve as a foundation for vaccine distribution across Texas, including Harris County.

PHASE 1A QUALIFICATIONS:

FIRST TIER

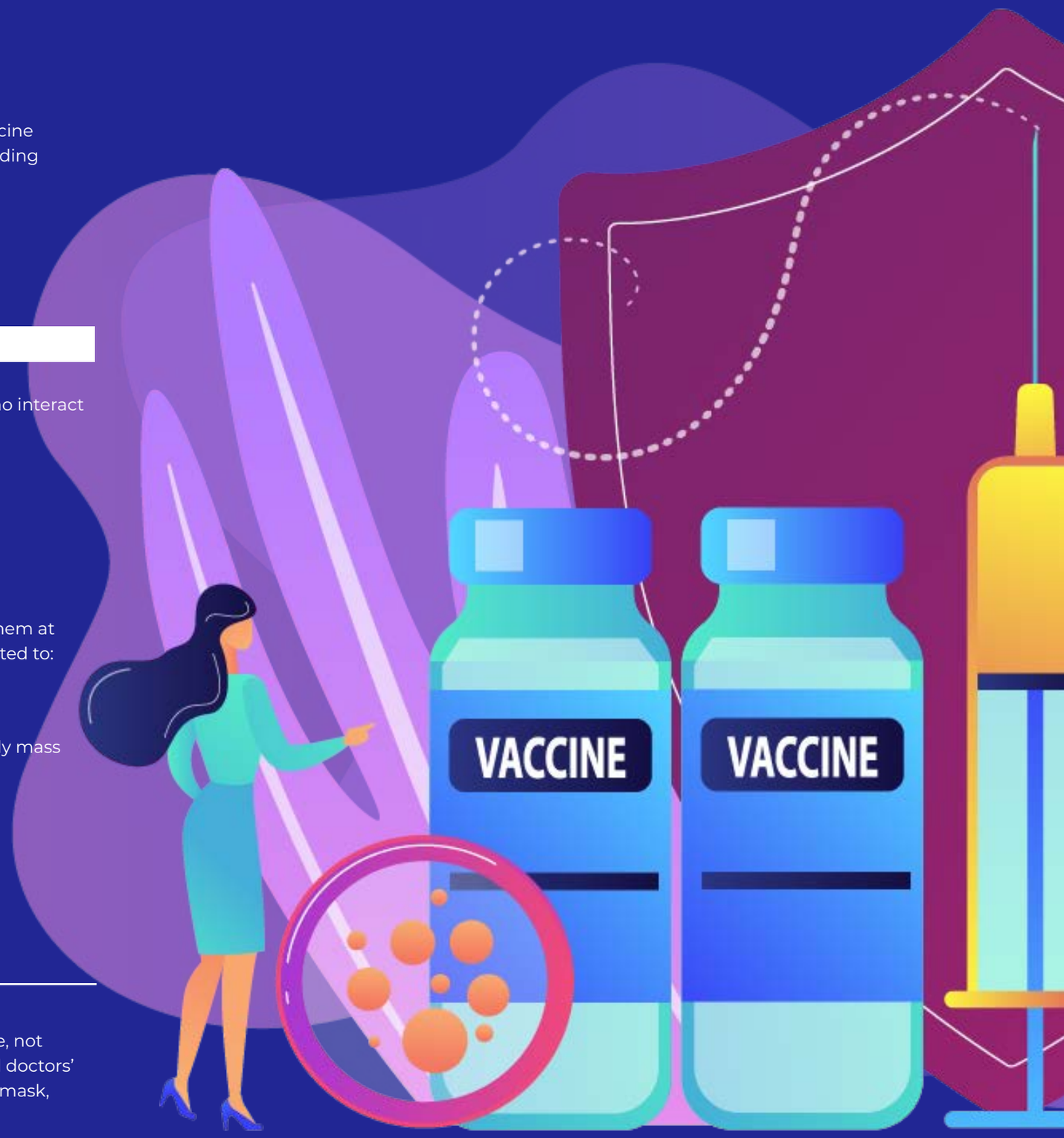
- Paid and unpaid workers in hospital settings working directly with patients who are positive or at high risk for COVID-19.

SECOND TIER

- Staff in outpatient care settings who interact with symptomatic patients.

PHASE 1B QUALIFICATIONS:

- People 65 years of age and older
- People 16 years of age and older with at least one chronic medical condition that puts them at increased risk for severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19, such as but not limited to:
  - Cancer
  - Chronic kidney disease
  - COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
  - Heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease or cardiomyopathies
  - Solid organ transplantation
  - Obesity and severe obesity (body mass index of 30 kg/m2 or higher)
  - Pregnancy
  - Sickle cell disease
  - Type 2 diabetes mellitus



At some point in 2021, there should be enough COVID-19 vaccines in production for everyone, not just healthcare workers or high-risk individuals. Vaccines will be provided at pharmacies and doctors' offices,. Until then, it is encouraged to continue protecting yourself and others by wearing a mask, practicing good hygiene, social distancing, and getting tested.

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Source: Harris County Public Health, CDC, Texas Department of Health and Safety Services