

## COMMON VACCINE MYTHS DEBUNKED

**Myth 1: Covid-19 vaccines aren't safe because they were developed too quickly.**

**This is FALSE.**

**THE TRUTH:** While the Covid-19 vaccines were developed quickly, safety wasn't compromised in any way. The clinical trials to check safety and efficacy weren't rushed at all. Because Covid-19 is similar to other coronaviruses that have been found in humans, not only could scientists find and identify this coronavirus quickly, but they could also build on previous research to speed up the process.

The vaccine developers also didn't skip any of the usual steps for testing a vaccine, but conducted some of the steps on an overlapping schedule to gather data faster. In essence, it was a collaborative effort across multiple countries as scientists worked together and shared information broadly to move the vaccine research forward in response to the pandemic.

Also, thanks to the reach of platforms like social media, vaccine developers could easily find enough people to volunteer for vaccine testing, which meant the research was both significant and reliable. And since Covid-19 is so contagious, and so widespread, it didn't take long for researchers to see if the vaccine worked.

Finally, the mRNA technology that's been used in the Pfizer vaccines has been safely used for decades to treat other illnesses, so researchers know that there are no long-term side-effects to worry about.

**Myth 2: The vaccines can lead to long-term illnesses or side-effects**

**This is FALSE.**

**THE TRUTH:** Vaccines are safe, but sometimes people do experience side-effects after they've been jabbed. These are generally minor, but should be reported to your healthcare practitioner.

Because of the way vaccines work, if there's going to be a side-effect or reaction to the vaccine, you see it shortly after the vaccine is administered – within minutes to hours. So if you don't get that kind of reaction, you'll be fine as the weeks and months go by.

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### Myth 3: I've already had Covid-19, so I don't need a vaccine

**This is FALSE.**

**THE TRUTH** Covid-19 comes with severe health risks, and you can also be reinfected, especially with a different variant to the one you had previously. So it's advisable to be vaccinated even if you've had Covid-19 before.

Scientists also aren't sure how long natural immunity lasts for, although early evidence suggests it may not last very long. In fact, it looks like the vaccine offers better protection against Covid-19 than natural infection.

### Myth 4: Getting the Covid-19 vaccine means I can stop wearing my mask and taking other precautions like ventilation, hand washing and social distancing.

**This is FALSE.**

**THE TRUTH:** You still need to take all of these precautions because vaccine uptake is low. Vaccines provide the greatest benefit when everyone has been vaccinated. Until such time as that happens, vaccines are part of the safety strategy against Covid-19 along with ventilation, wearing a mask, hand washing and social distancing.

### Myth 5: You can get Covid-19 from the vaccines.

**This is FALSE.**

**THE TRUTH:** The vaccines don't contain any live virus, so they absolutely cannot infect you. All they do is teach your body to produce antibodies against a single protein that is found on the virus: the protein that is responsible for infecting our cells. If you have symptoms like a headache or chills in the days after you are vaccinated, it's just because your body is building its immune response. It's not Covid-19 infection, and the symptoms will pass after a day or two.



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#### Myth 6: The Covid-19 vaccines will alter your DNA.

**This is FALSE.**

**THE TRUTH:** Many people seem to have confused messenger RNA (mRNA) with DNA. The Pfizer vaccine is an mRNA vaccine, but the J&J vaccine is not.

mRNA is literally just a messenger – it's job is just to tell our bodies which proteins to build antibodies against. Some people are afraid that mRNA will cause the virus to go into our DNA and mutate us, but it doesn't even go into the part of our cells where we have our DNA. So it can't – and doesn't – affect your DNA at all.

#### Myth 7: People with underlying conditions (aka co-morbidities) shouldn't get vaccinated.

**This is FALSE.**

**THE TRUTH:** In fact, it's critical that people with underlying conditions like diabetes and heart disease get vaccinated, because they are at a high risk for getting complications from Covid-19, and at a higher risk of dying from the disease too. Speak to your doctor if you have any concerns.

#### Myth 8: People with suppressed immune systems shouldn't get vaccinated.

**This is FALSE.**

**THE TRUTH:** This is another instance where it's critical for a group of people to get vaccinated. If you have a suppressed immune system as a result of cancer, an auto-immune disease, or HIV/Aids, you should get vaccinated.

Because there is no live virus in the vaccine, it won't hurt you. And while you might not get as much protection as people with healthy immune systems, you will still have some protection against Covid-19. Your doctor will be able to talk you through any questions you have.

#### Myth 9: Getting vaccinated can give you erectile dysfunction.

**This is FALSE.**

**THE TRUTH:** The vaccines won't give you erectile dysfunction, but if you catch Covid-19, it increases your risk of developing erectile dysfunction (by nearly six times). In other words, getting vaccinated will actually protect you from the erectile dysfunction that the virus can cause.



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**Myth 10: If you get vaccinated, it could make you infertile.**

**This is FALSE.**

**THE TRUTH:** There is absolutely no data that indicates this is true, nor is there even a theoretical reason vaccines could cause infertility. Women volunteers who participated in the vaccine's clinical trials were able to fall pregnant after vaccination.

Also, pregnant women infected with Covid-19 are at a higher risk of having a miscarriage or going into premature labour – so if you're considering having a baby, get vaccinated!

**Myth 11: If I'm pregnant or breastfeeding, I shouldn't get vaccinated.**

**This is FALSE.**

**THE TRUTH:** It is safe to get vaccinated during any stage of pregnancy or while breastfeeding. Evidence has also shown that people who have received Covid-19 mRNA vaccines while they're breastfeeding have antibodies produced by their own bodies after vaccination, in their breastmilk, which could help to protect their babies from Covid-19."

**Myth 12: I only need one dose of the Pfizer vaccine to be protected against Covid-19.**

**This is FALSE.**

**THE TRUTH:** There is no good reason to go against the dosage instructions of the manufacturers. The J&J vaccine is designed to be given in one dose, but the Pfizer vaccines are designed to be given in two doses. How many doses you need depends on the kind of vaccine you are given, and you should take the recommended number of doses to achieve the best level of immunity and protection.

**Myth 13: I should wait for a more effective vaccine.**

**This is FALSE.**

**THE TRUTH:** All Covid-19 vaccines are safe and effective, and it doesn't matter which one you get, so long as it's one that has been approved for use in South Africa, and is administered by someone who has been authorised to do so.

The aim is to get everyone in South Africa vaccinated, so it's important to take the vaccine that is offered to you.



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**Myth 14: I don't need to get vaccinated because I'm young and healthy.**

**This is FALSE.**

**THE TRUTH:** Overall, young and healthy people are less likely to get sick than older people, or people with other underlying conditions, but that doesn't mean it can't happen. And many young, healthy people who have caught the Delta variant around the world have ended up in the ICU with Covid-19.

Even if young, healthy people catch Covid-19 and don't have any symptoms, they can still suffer from long-haul Covid-19 months after the virus is no longer in their system. And they can unknowingly transmit Covid-19 to people who are more vulnerable to the disease. That's why it's important to vaccinate everyone – not just the old and those with underlying conditions.

**Myth 15: Covid-19 vaccines will deliver a microchip into my body.**

**This is FALSE.**

**THE TRUTH:** There are no electronic components in the vaccines. They consist of ingredients that are routinely used in other medicines, and do not contain microchips.

**Myth 16: The Covid-19 vaccine was developed with or contains controversial substances.**

**This is FALSE.**

**THE TRUTH:** The vaccines contain mRNA and other, normal vaccine ingredients, such as fats (which protect the mRNA), salts, as well as a small amount of sugar. These Covid-19 vaccines were not developed using foetal tissue, and they do not contain any material, such as implants, microchips or tracking devices.

**Myth 17: Receiving a Covid-19 vaccine can cause you to be magnetic.**

**This is FALSE.**

**THE TRUTH:** Covid-19 vaccines do not contain any ingredients that can produce an electromagnetic field at the site of your injection, and none of them contain any metals whatsoever.



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**Myth 18: Covid-19 vaccines cause someone who's been vaccinated to 'shed' virus.**

**This is FALSE.**

**THE TRUTH:** Vaccine shedding is a term that describes the release or discharge of any of the vaccine components in or outside of the body. This can only happen when a vaccine contains a weakened version of the virus you are vaccinating against, and none of the vaccines used in South Africa contain weakened SARS-CoV-2, which is the virus that causes Covid-19.