COVID-19 AND OUR COMMUNITY

Better Safe Than Sorry!

Facilitator's Guide

MIGRANT CLINICIANS **NETWORK**

MCN

COVID-19 and Our Community
Better Safe Than Sorry!

This guide is developed for community health promoters to help them in the task of explaining the basic concepts about COVID-19, with an emphasis on prevention, including vaccination.

This guide, developed by the MCN team, complements the flipchart "COVID-19 AND OUR COMMUNITY Better safe than sorry" and provides basic information in simple and clear language, so that the health promoter can explain each sheet to their community. The promoter will have to adapt the language and examples according to the group to which he is presenting.

We recommend that you make the session as participatory as possible, by asking questions and giving space for participants to say what they think and what they know, so that you can tailor the language and examples you will use during the session according to the characteristics of the group you are presenting to. In addition, resource links are provided to go deeper into the information if needed.

We recommend consistently checking our FAQ section to stay up to date. We are aware that our understanding of COVID-19, its variants, and the indications for the use of vaccines is evolving and therefore recommendations may change. MCN regularly updates information based on CDC recommendations.

[MCN Materials on COVID-19](#)

[CDC Information on COVID-19](#)

The flipchart can be downloaded and used with a credit to MCN. The flipchart can be downloaded and used without requesting permission, though credit should be given to MCN. We hope you find it useful, and we would love to know how you have used it in your community.

You can send your experiences, suggestions, and comments to agalvan@migrantclinician.org. Together we can help prevent diseases and future pandemics.
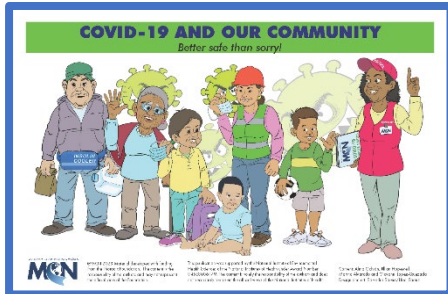
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Take the opportunity to introduce yourself and your organization. Start with a question like:

Who in the group had or has had COVID-19?

Then lead the discussion by explaining how COVID-19 has affected our community in many ways.

**The objectives of this talk are to recognize/understand:**

- Basic information about COVID-19

- The COVID-19 vaccination schedule

- Disinformation and misinformation

- COVID19 and Long COVID-19

- Prevention at the personal and community level

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What is a Pandemic?

A pandemic occurs when a new disease affects many people and spreads to many countries throughout the world. The 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which is easily transmitted from person to person and caused by a virus, resulted in a pandemic.
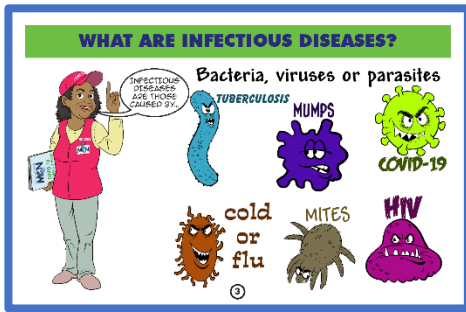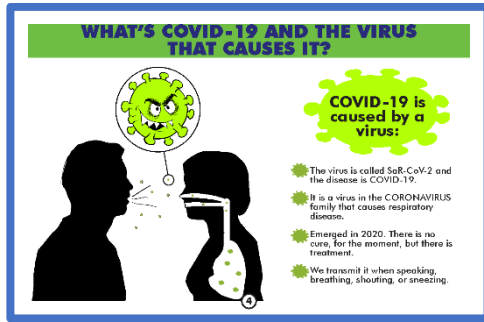
What Are Infectious Diseases?

Infectious diseases are disorders caused by organisms, such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites. Many organisms live inside and outside of our bodies. Many can cause us harm, but some are beneficial. However, under certain conditions, some organisms can cause disease. Some infectious diseases can be transmitted from person to person. Some are transmitted by insects or other animals. People can become infected by consuming contaminated food, drinking contaminated water, or by being exposed to organisms in the environment.
The signs and symptoms of the disease vary depending on the organism causing the infection.

- **Tuberculosis is caused by a bacillus**

- **The cold or flu is caused by a virus**

- **HIV is caused by a virus**

- **COVID-19 is caused by a virus**

Many infectious diseases, such as measles and chickenpox, can be prevented with vaccines.

Resources

➢ [National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID)](#)

➢ [Infectious Diseases | Mayo Clinic](#)

# What Is Covid-19 and the Virus That Causes It?

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

This virus is very contagious and spreads quickly. It is from the family of CORONAVIRUS that cause diseases in the respiratory tract, such as influenza and pneumonia.

Treatment and several vaccines are now available in the United States.

Resources

➤ What is COVID-19? | CDC

➤ Coronavirus | World Health Organization
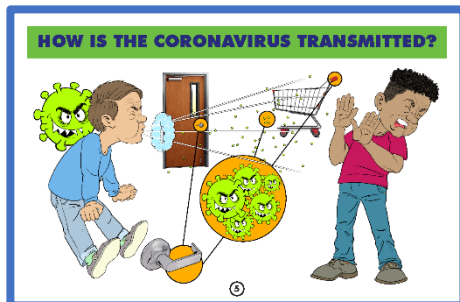
How Is the Coronavirus Transmitted?

COVID-19 is transmitted when an individual breathes in droplets and particles expelled from a person infected with the virus. The individual can become infected when those droplets and particles land on their eyes, nose, or mouth. The virus can be left on objects and surfaces, which when touched by a person can infect that person.

Anyone infected with COVID-19 can spread the disease, even if they do NOT have symptoms.

Resource

➤ How COVID-19 Is Transmitted | CDC
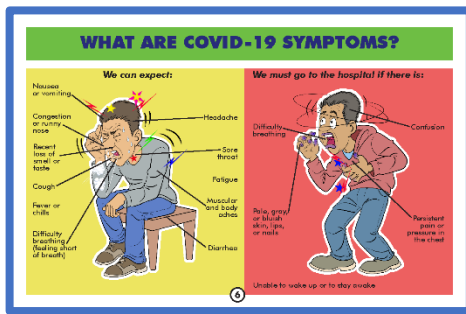
What Are COVID-19 Symptoms?

Symptoms may change with new variants of COVID-19 and may vary depending on vaccination status.

Symptoms Include:

- Fevers or chills
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing (feeling short of breath)
- Fatigue
- Muscular and body pains

- Headache
- Recent Loss of Smell or Taste
- Sore Throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

A person should go to the hospital if they have the symptoms that are in the red box:

- Difficulty breathing
- Confusion
- Persistent Pain or Pressure in the Chest
- Pale, gray, or bluish skin, lips or nails
- Unable to stay awake

Resource

➢ Coronavirus | World Health Organization

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Who Should Take Extra Care?

People who are most at risk of getting COVID-19 are those who already have serious health problems, such as heart or lung conditions, a weakened immune system, obesity, or diabetes.

The disease is more likely to affect:

- Older Adults

- People who already have a chronic illness

- Immunocompromised People

- Farmworkers

- Smokers

- Health Workers

- Essential Workers

Essential workers, farmworkers, and health care workers are more at risk because their jobs place them in situations where there may have increased exposure to the COVID-19 virus.

Resources

➢ COVID-19 - People with Certain Medical Conditions | CDC

➢ Factors That Affect Your Risk of Getting Very Sick from COVID-19 | CDC

How Do We Protect Ourselves?

- Getting vaccinated primarily

- Avoiding close contact with someone who is sick or has symptoms.

- Maintaining a healthy distance between people when in closed public spaces.

- Avoiding places with a lot of people and indoor spaces with little air circulation (ventilation).

- Washing hands frequently with soap and water

- When hands cannot be washed with soap and water, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

- Using face masks in closed spaces according to the risk that you estimate

- Covering the nose and mouth using your inner elbow or using a tissue when coughing or sneezing and disposing it.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth

- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces

- Staying informed

Resource

➢ COVID-19 Prevention | World Health Organization
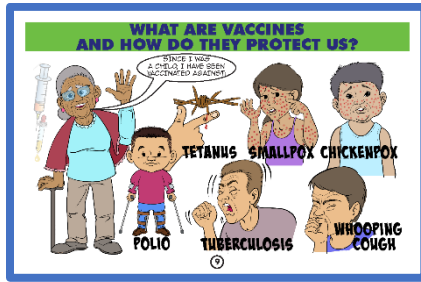
What Are Vaccines and How Do They Protect Us?

A vaccine is a preparation that is used to stimulate the body's immune response against diseases. Vaccines can be injected, swallowed, or sprayed into the nose.

How Do Vaccines Work?

Vaccines help your immune system fight infections faster and more effectively. When you get vaccinated, the immune system's fighting response is awakened, defending the body from the virus. The vaccine also activates the immune system's memory, so if the virus invades the body again, the immune system remembers it and kills it.
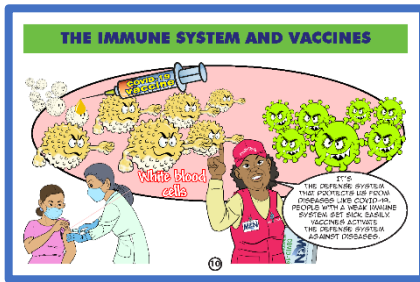
How do vaccines protect us from COVID-19?

Vaccines protect us from getting seriously ill, going to the hospital, avoiding Long COVID-19, and death.

They activate the body's immune system, that is, the system that protects the body from viruses or microbes that cause disease.

Resource

➢ How do vaccines work? | World Health Organization

The Immune System and Vaccines

The immune system is a complex network of cells, tissues, and organs. Together they help your body fight infections and other diseases. When germs like bacteria or viruses invade your body, they attack and multiply, causing an infection or illness. The immune system kicks in and produces a fighting response against these germs. People who have a weak or poorly functioning immune system get sick easily. Vaccines activate this defense system so that germs do not make us sick.

Vaccines strengthen the immune system so that when viruses or bacteria invade, we are protected and do not become seriously ill or die.
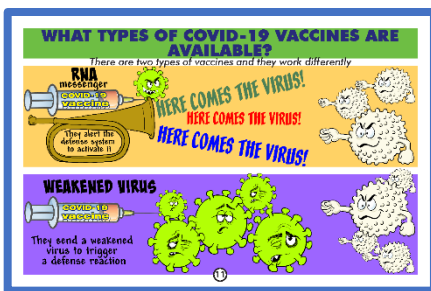
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What Types Of COVID-19 Vaccines Are Available?

There are two types of vaccines, and they work differently.

- **Messenger mRNA**
  They send a message to the defense system to become activated and defend itself
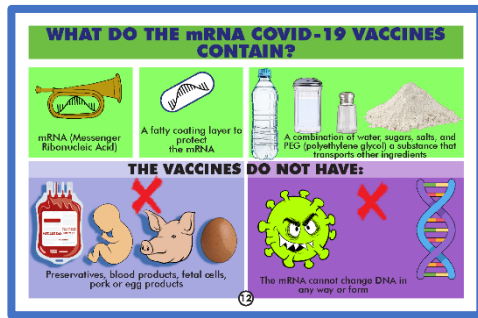
- **Weakened Virus**
  They send a weakened virus to trigger a defense reaction.

There are currently 3 COVID-19 vaccines approved in the United States:

- ✓ Pfizer-BioNTech
- ✓ Moderna
- ✓ Novavax

Resource

➢ Stay Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines | CDC

What Do the mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines Contain?

- mRNA (messenger ribonucleic acid)

- A fatty coating layer to protect the mRNA

- Combination of water, sugars, salts and other substances to transport the mRNA

COVID-19 vaccine ingredients are considered safe for most people. Nearly all the ingredients in COVID-19 vaccines can be found in foods: fats, sugar and salts.

None of the vaccines affect or interact with our DNA and DO NOT CONTAIN:

- Preservatives

- Antibiotics such as sulfonamide or any other antibiotic

- Medications or therapies such as ivermectin or any other medication

- Tissues such as fetal cells, gelatin, or any material from any animal

- Food proteins such as eggs or egg products, gluten, peanuts, tree nuts, nut products, or any nut by-products

- Metals such as iron, nickel, cobalt, titanium, or rare earth alloys.

- Microelectronics, electrodes, chips, or electrical conductors

- Latex
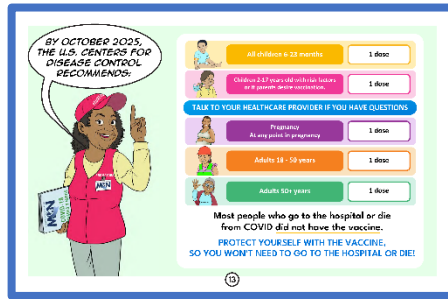
Who can receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

By October 2025, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends:

COVID-19 VACCINE IS AVAILABLE!	VACCINE AND DOSAGE
ASK YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER! **SOME STATES HAVE DIFFERENT RECOMMENDATIONS**	
All children 6-23 months Children 2-17 years old with risk factors or if parents desire vaccination	1dose
TALK TO YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS.	
Pregnancy At any point of pregnancy	1 dose
Adults 18 –50 years	1 dose
Adults 50+ years	1 dose
MOST PEOPLE WHO GO TO THE HOSPITAL OR DIE FROM COVID DID NOT HAVE THE VACCINE. PROTECT YOURSELF WITH THE VACCINE, SO YOU WON'T NEED TO GO TO THE HOSPITAL OR DIE!	

Resource

➢ [Who Can Get the Updated COVID-19 Vaccine | MCN](#)
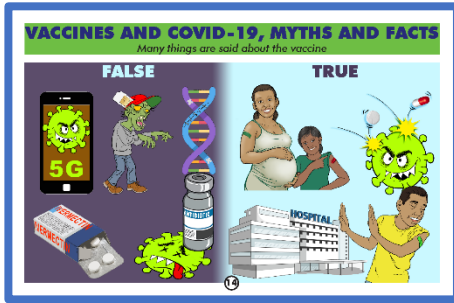
Vaccines and Covid-19, Myths and Facts

There is a lot of misinformation out there about the vaccine. What is known is that...

1. the vaccine does NOT affect fertility,

2. the vaccine does NOT change your DNA,

3. the 5G network does NOT produce COVID-19,

4. the vaccine does NOT contain a microchip to control you,

5. The vaccine does NOT turn you into a zombie,

6. antibiotics do not treat COVID-19,

7. Ivermectin does not prevent or cure COVID-19,

8. children and pregnant women can be vaccinated, and

9. vaccines are safe.

We suggest that you ask the group what myths they have heard and then the promotora can respond.

Resources

➢ Bust Myths and Learn the Facts about COVID-19 Vaccines | CDC
➢ Debunking COVID-19 myths | Mayo Clinic

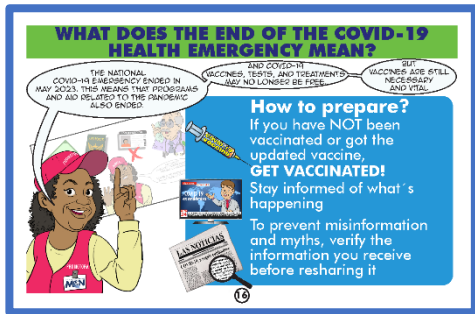# What Can We Expect When We Get Vaccinated?

Some side effects after getting vaccinated can be:

- Fever

- Headache

- Fatigue (tiredness)

- Shaking chills

- Pain at the injection site

- General discomfort

But they all go away in a day or two.

Resources

➢ [What to Expect When Getting the COVID-19 Vaccine | MCN](#)
➢ [Possible Side Effects After Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine | CDC](#)

What Does the End of The Covid-19 Health Emergency Mean?

The national Covid-19 emergency ended on May 2023. This means that programs and aid related to the pandemic also ended and vaccinations, COVID-19 tests and treatments may no longer be free, but vaccines are still necessary and vital.

How can we prepare ourselves?

- If you haven't been vaccinated or gotten the updated vaccine, GET VACCINATED!

- Stay informed of what's happening

- Verify the information you have received before sharing it to other people to prevent disinformation and myths.

Additional information

Note that during the health emergency, the vaccine against COVID-19 was easily available to everyone:

- Immigration status DID NOT matter

- NO identification documents were required

- There was NO cost.

Before sharing the information above, be sure to check with your local health department or a trusted community organization for the latest updates.

As of May 2023, the health emergency ended, and this means that:

- The vaccine, COVID-19 tests and treatment may no longer be free;
- But vaccines are still necessary and vital to protect us from severe COVID-19 and death.

We recommended that you review and use this MCN resource:

- ➢ [What's the end of Public Health Emergency for COVID-19? | MCN](#)

What Should We Do?

We should continue to protect ourselves as mentioned above.

In addition to GETTING VACCINATED, we can protect ourselves by:

- Wearing a mask in closed spaces based on the risk of your location.

- Maintaining an adequate distance between people when they are in closed public spaces.

- Washing hands frequently with soap and water and using hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol when hands cannot be washed with soap and water

- Improving the ventilation of places where we are

- Avoiding crowded and closed spaces with poor air circulation

- Avoiding close contact with someone who is sick or symptomatic.

- Taking the COVID-19 home test if you have symptoms or have been in contact with a sick person.

- Knowing your rights in relation to COVID-19 at work

In addition

- Maintaining general hygiene

- Avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth

- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces

- Staying informed

We Have Been Vaccinated; Do We Still Need to Protect Ourselves?

Even after vaccination, we must continue to protect ourselves by:

- Wearing face masks
- Washing our hands frequently and keeping ourselves clean.
- Ventilating closed spaces
- Receiving updated vaccines
- Knowing what our risks are

What Other Risks Should We Consider?

You must assess your own risk. This means that in order to decide which precautionary measures to take, you should consider the following questions.

- What is the level of transmission in the area where I live?
- Will a meeting be held inside or outside?
- What job do I do?
- Is ventilation available?
- How many people will be gathered?
- Am I sick or do I have a health condition that makes me more vulnerable to becoming ill?
- Is there a person who is sick or has a condition in the group?
- When was my last vaccine?
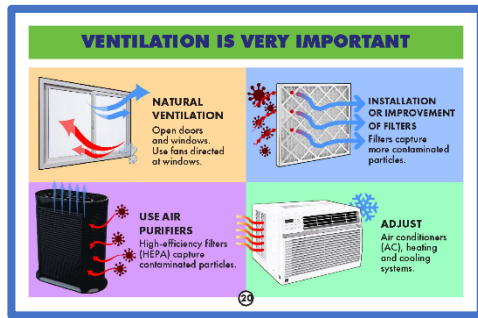
Ventilation is Very Important

COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through the air. Transmission happens when we breathe in aerosolized particles or fine droplets contaminated with the virus. These particles are small enough to travel great distances and stay in the air for long periods of time. Closed places with poor ventilation and few controls such as physical distancing, facial protection, and hygiene, present a higher risk of transmission.

Improving ventilation can help reduce virus particles in your home and prevent the spread of COVID-19. You may not know if a visitor or someone in your home has COVID-19 or other respiratory viruses. Good ventilation, along with other preventative measures, can help prevent you and others from getting and spreading COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses.

The use of natural ventilation is recommended by opening doors and windows at home or using air purifiers. Check out the MCN infographic below if you want to learn more about this topic.

Resource

➤ Ventilation as an Essential Control Strategy to Avoid Contagion | MCN

➤ Ventilation and Coronavirus (COVID-19) | US EPA
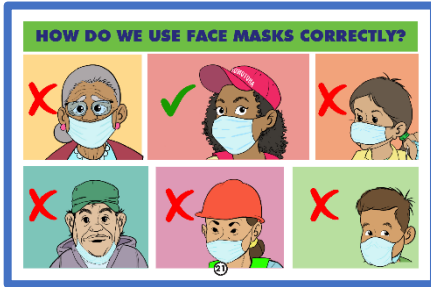
How Do We Use Face Masks Correctly?

Before putting it on and when putting it on:

- Wash your hands with soap and water before putting it on
- Check which side is correct (Thick seams correspond to the inside of the mask)
- Place the elastic bands over your head or ears and place the mask so it is completely covering your nose and mouth. Make sure that your hands do not touch the internal part.

While you're wearing it:

- Always keep it covering your nose and mouth.
- Avoid touching it while using
- If you must touch it, wash your hands as soon as possible.
- Change your mask as soon as it gets wet and replace it with a clean, dry one (unless it's made of cloth, which can absorb more).
- Make sure it fits snug against your face, as gaps can let air in and out that can contain droplets.
- Make sure you can see and breathe easily.

How should you take it off?

- Wash your hands before removing it
- Remove it by taking it from the strips on the sides and carefully separating it
- Remove it from behind holding it by the garters and without touching the front part; then wash your hands again
- Put it immediately in a closed container until you wash it (or if it's not cloth, throw it away immediately in a closed container)

There are several types of respirators and masks or mouth covers. You can see the MCN fact sheet:

[Fact Sheet: Protecting Ourselves and Others With Respirators and Masks | MCN](#)

Resource

➢ [Use and Care of Masks – COVID-19 | CDC](#)

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How Can We Fight Against The Virus?

Each and every one of us can do something to protect ourselves and our loved ones.

As an individual, one can fight the virus by:

• Having good hygiene,

• Protecting others

• Getting information from good sources that are reliable.

• Avoiding sending wrong information to others

• Checking that the messages you receive are factual

• GETTING YOURSELF AND YOUR CHILDREN VACCINATED

If you take care of yourself, you are taking care of your community!

Resource

➢ How Community Spread Happens Fast - Coronavirus
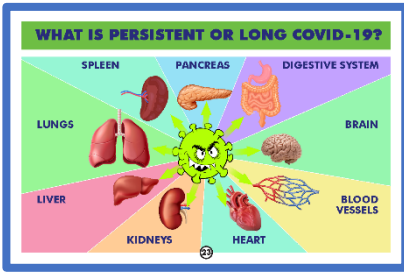
# What Is Prolonged, Persistent, or Long Covid-19?

Long COVID-19 encompasses a wide range of new, recurrent or ongoing health problems that people may have after becoming infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. Most people with COVID-19 get better within a few days to a few weeks after infection. At least four weeks after infection, is when long COVID-19 could begin to be identified for the first time. Anyone who has been infected can suffer from long COVID-19. Most people with long COVID-19 experienced symptoms days after they first learned they had COVID-19, but others did not know when they became infected or never knew they were infected.

There is no test that determines if your symptoms or condition is due to COVID-19. Long COVID-19 is not one illness. For a long COVID-19 diagnosis, your health care provider considers your health history, whether you had a diagnosis of COVID-19 from a positive test or because you were exposed to the virus, in addition to examining your overall health.

- Long COVID-19 can include a wide range of ongoing health problems; these conditions can last weeks, months, or years.

- Long COVID-19 occurs more often in people who had severe COVID-19 illness, but anyone who has been infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 can experience Long COVID.

- People who are not vaccinated against COVID-19 and become infected may be at a higher risk of developing Long COVID-19 compared to people who have been vaccinated.

- People can be reinfected with the virus that causes COVID-19, multiple times. Each time a person is infected or reinfected, they have a risk of developing Long COVID-19.

- It is possible that a person with Long COVID-19 may not have tested positive on the screening test or may not even have known they were infected.

- CDC and its partners are working to better understand who is suffering from long COVID-19 and why they are suffering from it, including working to see if groups that were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 are at increased risk.

Resource

➢ Long COVID or Post-COVID Conditions | CDC
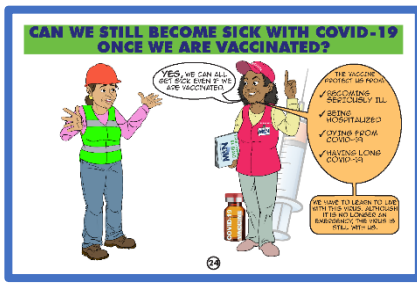
Can We Still Become Sick with Covid-19 Once We Are Vaccinated?

YES. You can also spread COVID-19 to other people.

- COVID-19 vaccines help protect against serious illness, hospitalization, and death.

- People who are up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines are much less likely to experience severe symptoms than people who are not up to date, if they become infected with the virus that causes COVID-19.

We must consider that COVID-19 already has a constant presence among us. We will have to learn to live with it and learn to manage it to in order to keep it under control.

COVID-19: How Has It Affected Us?

L The COVID-19 pandemic may have brought many changes to how you live your life. It changed daily routines, brought financial pressures, uncertainty, and social isolation. Many people are worried about getting sick and how it could affect their job, their finances, and their future.

Information overload, rumors and misinformation can make your life feel out of control and make it unclear what to do.

COVID-19 can make people feel stress, fear, sadness, and loneliness. Mental health disorders, such as anxiety and depression, can worsen.

People with substance abuse disorders, particularly those addicted to tobacco or opioids, are likely to have worse outcomes if they contract COVID-19. That is because these addictions can harm lung function and weaken the immune system, causing chronic conditions such as heart disease and lung disease, which increase the risk of serious complications from COVID-19.

For all these reasons, it's important to learn self-care strategies and get the care you need to help you cope.

We suggest to the health promoter to visit the Witness-to-Witness page to find resources on self-care.

Information regarding COVID-19 will continue to change. Stay informed!

Resources

➢ Witness to Witness | MCN

You can view MCN's W2W Comic Book here:

➢ Helping the Helpers - Comic Book

Credits

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