

## Is this you?

You have likely heard the words “vaccine hesitancy” on the news or seen a meme about it on social media. Does it apply to you?

Vaccine hesitancy basically means an individual is hesitant to get the vaccine. Thanks to the fact that news does not need to be true in order to be repeated and propagated on social media, you may have all sorts of false reasons to not get vaccinated. Or perhaps, you simply have not heard the truth through the ruckus. Below you will find common reasons people are hesitating to get the COVID-19 vaccine and a little reality that may clear your way to vaccination.

### 1. Vaccines developed at “Warp Speed” can’t be safe.

Although COVID-19 vaccines were developed in record time, every vaccine used in the US has to be authorized by the Food and Drug Administration. They have gone through all of the same steps and requirements as every other vaccine, meeting all SAFETY STANDARDS. Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines were built off successful mRNA research and researchers’ previous experience with SARS. Using mRNA meant that they didn’t have to work with the entire virus structure.

### 2. mRNA vaccines can change your DNA. They are dangerous, and that is why we haven’t used them before.

mRNA vaccines have been studied before for flu, Zika, and rabies. However, there was no need to go through the costly process of developing a new vaccine for diseases that already had a vaccine. As soon as the necessary information about the COVID virus was available, scientists began designing mRNA instructions for cells to build the unique spike protein for a COVID-19 vaccine. mRNA does NOT enter your cell’s nucleus or affect your DNA. Additionally, the spike protein is made very fragile and the messenger RNA does not reproduce.

### 3. The side effects are terrible. I might as well get COVID.

Most people who receive COVID-19 vaccine, if they have a reaction at all, get a sore arm, fatigue, headache, body aches and/ or chills. Side effects usually only last 1-2 days and they are not from being “infected with” COVID. You cannot get COVID from any of the current vaccines available. None of them introduce a live virus into your body, as they are designed using only pieces of the virus. The “side effects” are your body learning to fight the COVID-19 virus and are much less severe than a COVID-19 infection. Only 2-5 people per million experience anaphylaxis, or a severe allergic reaction, to the vaccine. (You have a much better chance of getting struck by lightning!) Vaccine providers are prepared with epinephrine to treat a severe reaction.

### 4. I’m young and healthy, so I don’t need the COVID-19 vaccine.

Young adults are the MOST LIKELY to become infected with COVID-19. In fact, the new variants seem to be spreading more rapidly among young people. Additionally, some people who have had just a mild illness due to COVID have developed what could be long-lasting medical issues like lung, heart, or neurological damage, strokes, seizures, and blood clots.

### 5. Other people need it more than I do.

There is now enough vaccine for everyone. You don’t have to worry about someone else not being vaccinated because you received a dose. Anyone 16 or over is eligible and can now be vaccinated.

### 6. The Johnson & Johnson pause proves how dangerous these vaccines are.

The United States elected to pause the dispensation of Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine when our Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System detected six women had developed life-threatening blood clots

within two weeks of becoming vaccinated with Johnson & Johnson vaccine. These 6 instances occurred out of nearly 7 million doses of Johnson & Johnson vaccines administered. The math is clear: you are much more likely to become hospitalized from COVID than to develop blood clots from the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. While these 6 cases are unfortunate and concerning, it is encouraging to see how well our Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System is working, that it discovered this small number of similarities. Although the reactions were extremely rare, the CDC and FDA recommended a pause out of an abundance of caution while they further investigated the cases and have determined that that the vaccine's known and potential benefits outweigh its known and potential risks.

**7. The vaccines don't work since vaccinated people are still getting COVID**

The goal of the vaccine program is not to completely stop the disease or completely prevent someone from contracting the virus. It is to slow the virus down and prevent serious illness, hospitalization and/or death. Vaccinated people, who later test positive for COVID, are generally going to experience minimal to mild symptoms and be less likely to spread the virus to others.

COVID-19 vaccination is a public health measure to minimize the chance that COVID-19 will make you severely ill or cause death and reduce the chance that you will spread the disease to others. If you haven't yet been vaccinated, call Aitkin County Public Health at 218-927-7200 regarding vaccine clinics throughout the county.