

## 5 reasons Christians should get the COVID-19 vaccine

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By Deborah Haarsma

Should you get the COVID vaccine? Many Christians are saying “no” or “not yet.” Here are five reasons to say “yes” when you are eligible.

### 1. COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective

Misinformation and conspiracy theories fill social media, making people cautious. Yet all vaccines in the U.S. are required to go through a rigorous testing and approval process. The process was accelerated for COVID-19, but not by shortcutting the research. Rather, companies were paid to produce millions of doses early, in hopes their vaccine would work. I’m in a vaccine trial myself and can personally attest to the rigor and care being taken. As Francis Collins points out, all of the data are publicly available and transparent. Dr. Collins vouches for the new vaccines as the director of the nation’s biomedical research, as a Christian, and by personal example (he was one of the first to receive the shot).

### 2. Protect others as well as yourself

Some people will not be able to take the vaccine at all due to other serious health conditions. When you get the vaccine, you help build up the “community immunity” that protects others. If large numbers of people are vaccinated, COVID won’t be able to spread to the most vulnerable among us (see our Common Question on vaccines for more details). Thousands of Christians have committed to following public health guidelines in our Christian Statement on Science in Pandemic Times. The Statement was signed by medical and faith leaders from different Christian traditions, different parts of the country, and different political parties, yet agree that masks and vaccination are ways to love our neighbors.

### 3. The sooner the better

Widespread vaccination is the fastest and most permanent way to stop the spread. Nearly half a million people in the United States have already died of COVID-19 and millions more have been sick. Many others are struggling—those who've lost jobs, the lonely, those suffering mental illness, the healthcare workers serving on the front lines, and the teachers and kids dealing with online school. All of this will end as soon as we stamp out this virus! You can help your community by getting the vaccine as soon as you are eligible.

#### **4. COVID-19 vaccines are ethical**

Many Christians are concerned about the possible use of fetal cells in vaccines. The good news is that no vaccines contain human cells! Moreover, the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines do not use human cells even in the production process. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine does use a human cell line in production; this is an immortal cell line that came from a fetus aborted in 1985 (the abortion was not performed for this purpose). Yet even here, the cells used today are descended many generations from the original fetus and were never part of an actual human body. While the association with abortion gives many Christians pause, there is substantial agreement among Christian theologians and ethicists that the connection to fetal cell lines should not make these vaccines off-limits for Christians; see our Common Question on vaccines for more.

#### **5. The disease is riskier than the vaccine**

No vaccine is 100% risk-free, just as no medical procedure is risk free. Christians need to weigh the risks on both sides. COVID-19 is a serious disease, much worse than the flu. By now we've all known people who have had it. Some people have mild cases but others have serious symptoms, hospitalization, and long-term complications. The risks of the vaccine are less than the risks of the disease. Our Common Question on vaccines weighs the risks in more detail.

***Love your neighbor, get the shot***

Let's keep praying for those who have been hit hardest by the pandemic. Let's keep caring for our neighbors through this crisis. May Christians be known as the people

most wise in discerning science, most courageous in fighting for justice, and most compassionate in caring for the sick. We should be the ones most willing to make sacrifices for the sake of others, following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Vaccination is a concrete way you can care for your family, your church, and your community.