



Western Cape  
Government

Health



PACK  
Practical Approach to Care Kit

5

Information and advice for the home:

## Understanding the COVID-19 vaccine



Practical Approach to Care Kit

PACK Home · 2021

# Welcome to PACK Home

The Practical Approach to Care Kit – PACK – is used by nurses, doctors and community health workers in their everyday work to care for patients at the clinic and in the community – **PACK Adult**, **PACK Adolescent**, **PACK Child** and **PACK Community**.



**PACK Home** is designed for people seeking more information about how to care for their own health and the health of their family at home.

**PACK Home** is published in small volumes and has been made available in several languages. It covers a wide range of topics, including staying COVID-19 safe, managing COVID-19 in the home, understanding the COVID-19 vaccine and coping with a chronic condition.



Browse or download **PACK Home** volumes from [www.coronawise.org.za](http://www.coronawise.org.za)

**PACK Home** was developed by the Knowledge Translation Unit, University of Cape Town Lung Institute, in partnership with the Western Cape Department of Health. We thank Western Cape Department of Health and their clinicians and managers for their valuable contribution to this document. See the list of their names on our website [www.knowledgetranslation.co.za](http://www.knowledgetranslation.co.za).

**DISCLAIMER:** This information should not be considered as medical advice. It is not a replacement for a visit with a nurse, doctor or other healthcare professional. If you have concerns about your individual medical situation, please see a healthcare professional. This information is provided on an 'as is' basis without any warranties regarding accuracy, relevance, usefulness or fitness for purpose. You use this information at your sole risk.

Last updated: 21 May 2021

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# What is COVID-19?

- COVID-19 is a disease caused by a coronavirus.
- It causes fever, sore throat or cough.
- COVID-19 can also make it difficult to breathe and cause a change in your sense of taste or smell.

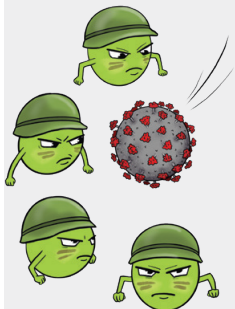


## Coronavirus spreads easily

- COVID-19 spreads mainly when we breathe in small droplets produced when someone with COVID-19 breathes, coughs, sneezes, sings, talks, or shouts.
- Coronavirus spreads in waves that last for several weeks or months. During a wave, more people have the virus and are getting sick. It is more likely that you will catch coronavirus during this time.



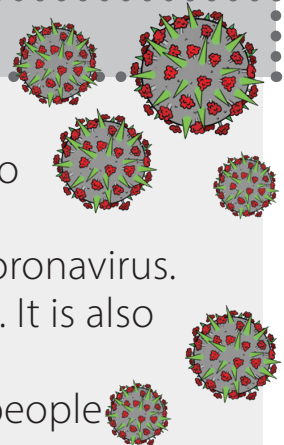
## What happens when you get infected by coronavirus?



- Your body has an immune system or army whose job it is to fight infections.
- When you breathe in coronavirus, your immune system fights the coronavirus and tries to kill it.
- Often the immune system kills the coronavirus, but sometimes the coronavirus overwhelms the immune system, making you sick.

## What is a COVID-19 variant?

- As viruses spread across communities, they often change to become more effective at spreading from one person to another, or at making people severely ill.
- Around the world, there are new versions or 'variants' of coronavirus.
- In South Africa we have a COVID-19 variant called 501Y.V2. It is also called B.1.351.
- This variant has spread very rapidly, and has made many people sick, even some who have had COVID-19 before.



**To prevent further spread of COVID-19 we need to get vaccinated while we continue to stick to COVID prevention measures: avoiding close contact with others and wearing a mask in public.**



# Keep apart from others

1,5 metres



## Why must we keep apart from each other?

COVID-19 spreads mainly when we breathe in small droplets produced when someone with COVID-19 breathes, coughs, sneezes, sings, talks or shouts.

### Keep apart from others to allow less chance for coronavirus to spread.

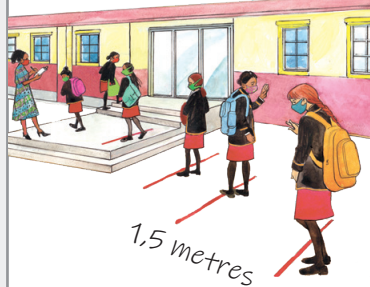
- This will help protect those at risk of severe COVID-19 – those over 55 years or with diabetes, HIV, TB, kidney disease, hypertension, chronic lung disease or cancer.
- It will also mean less stress on our clinics and hospitals so that those who need healthcare can still get it.

## How do we keep apart from each other?

Stay home.



Keep at least 1,5 metres apart from people.



Only visit public spaces and use public transport when necessary.

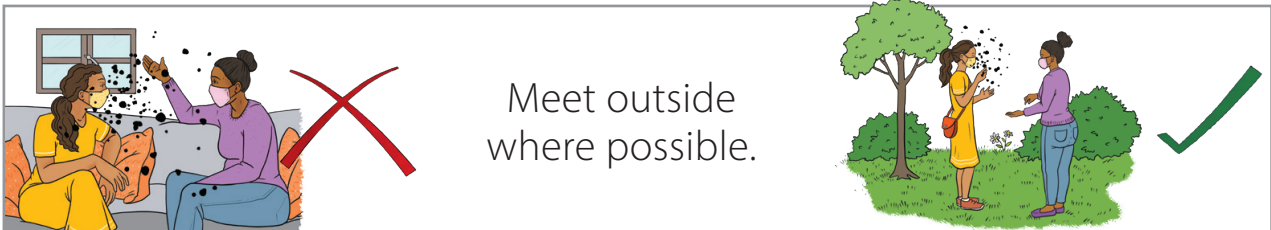
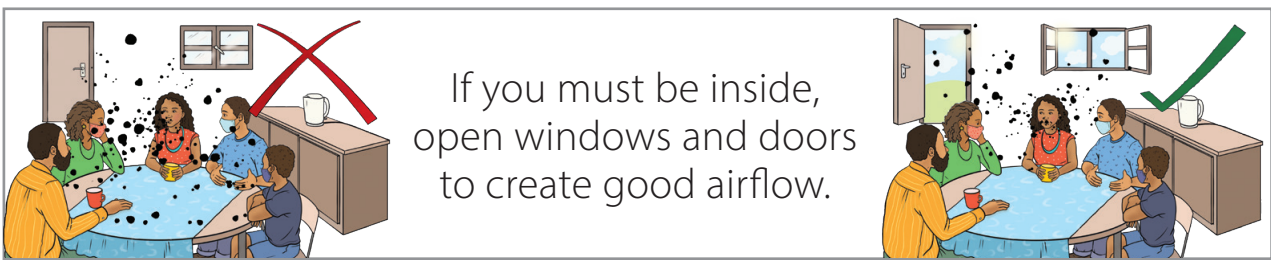
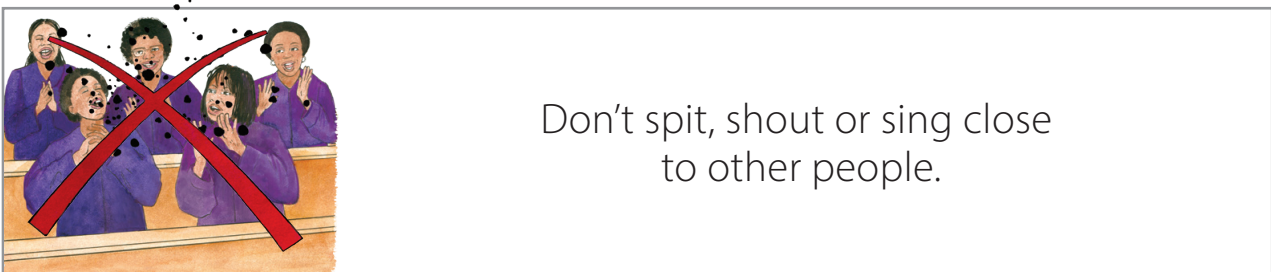
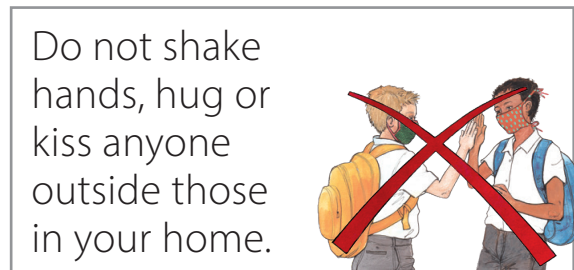
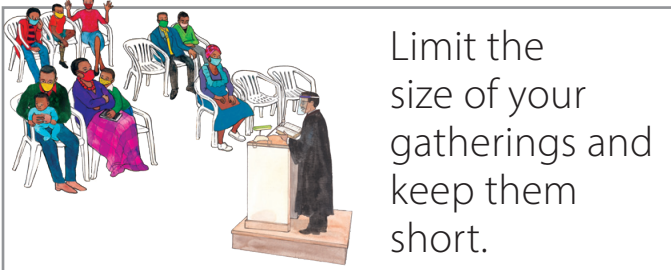
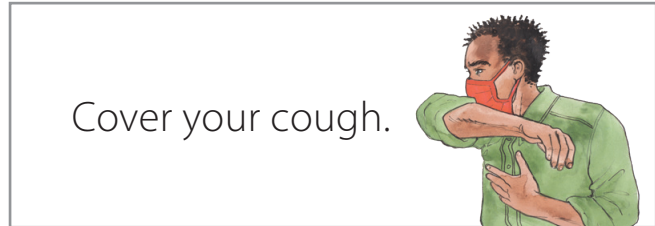
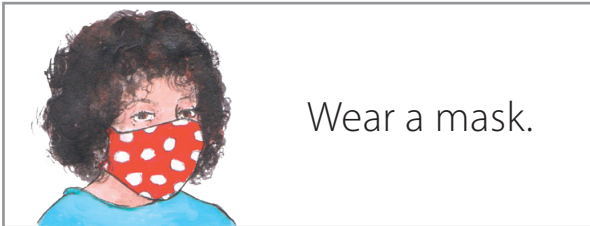


Avoid crowds, close contact and confined spaces.



# Spend time with others safely

When you spend time with others from outside your home, do so safely to avoid spreading coronavirus.



**Be extra careful if you are at risk of severe COVID-19: over 55 years or with diabetes, HIV, TB, kidney disease, hypertension, chronic lung disease or cancer.**

# Wear a mask in public

- Cloth masks protect you from coronavirus and help to reduce its spread.
- Even with a mask, it is still important to stick to the other measures to stop coronavirus spreading.
- Children under 2 years should not wear a mask.
- A good cloth mask has 3 layers (avoid T-shirt fabric) and can be washed in hot water.



**If you are sick with COVID-19 or caring for someone who has it, speak to your health worker or hotline about what masks and protection to use.**

## Use a cloth mask safely:



- Wash your hands before and after using your mask.
- Ensure your mask covers your mouth and nose.
- Touch only the straps when you remove it.
- Replace your mask if wet.



Do not touch your face or fiddle with your mask.



Do not share masks. If you do not have one, use bandana or scarf instead.

Do not leave used masks lying around; they may have coronavirus on them.



Wash masks with soap and very hot water (60°C). If the water is not very hot, boil the mask for 1 minute to disinfect it.



Have at least 2 masks so that you have a clean one ready.



# Why do we need a COVID-19 vaccine?

There are many viruses which cause diseases that can lead to suffering and death. We prevent those disease with vaccinations.

Our children get vaccinated in their first few years to prevent diseases like measles, polio and TB.



Teenagers get a vaccine to protect against a sexually transmitted virus that causes cancer.



We vaccinate healthcare workers to protect them from viruses they might catch at work.

We offer flu vaccines to older people, pregnant women, and those with chronic conditions as flu can be severe in these people.



## There is no cure for COVID-19.

- Many people have been sick with COVID-19, some severely.
- Some have not recovered and months later are still unwell.
- Some people who had COVID have caught it a second time.
- Thousands have died from COVID-19.
- We have all lost social, educational and work opportunities because of COVID-19 lockdowns.



## Vaccination will help to end the COVID-19 pandemic.

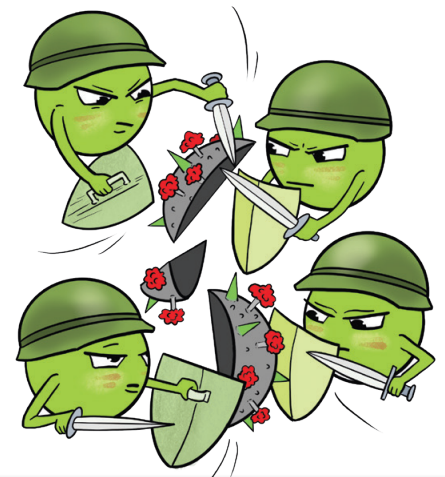


It will prevent sickness and death from COVID-19 and allow us to get back to normal life.



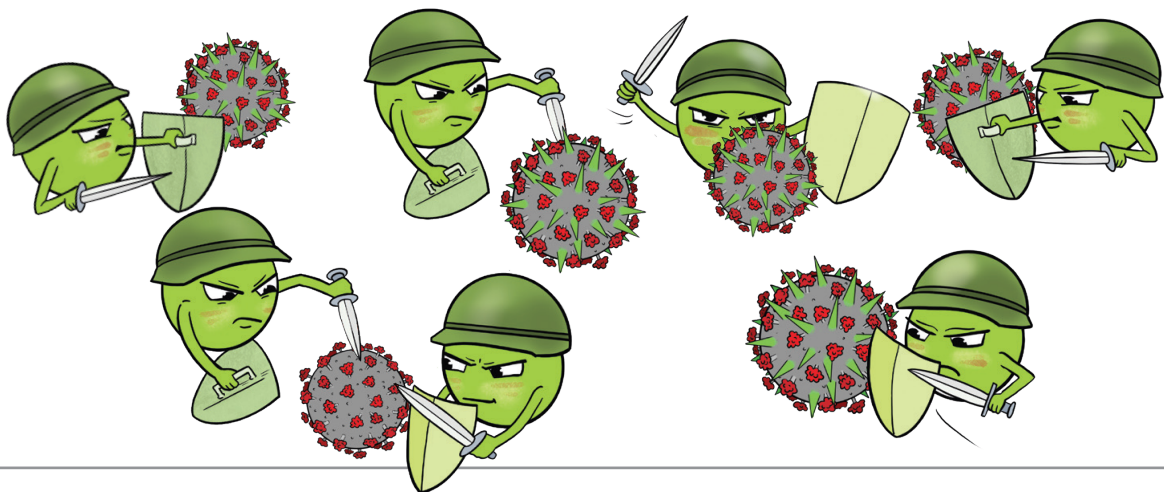
# How does the vaccine work?

- There are several different types of COVID-19 vaccine. Most of them work against the 501Y.V2 variant (B.1.351).
- They train your immune system to recognise coronavirus and prevent it from making you severely ill.
- They do this by introducing inactive bits of the coronavirus into the body so that your immune system learns to recognise the virus.



**These bits of coronavirus are not live and cannot make you sick.**

If you then catch coronavirus from someone with COVID-19, your immune system recognises it quickly and prevents it from making you very ill.



COVID-19 vaccines will protect you from becoming severely ill or dying from COVID-19. They will help to keep you healthy so you can be there again for your family and friends.





# Are COVID-19 vaccines safe?

- For over 100 years, vaccines have saved millions of lives.
- Vaccine developers have used tried and tested methods to develop the COVID-19 vaccine.
- The COVID-19 vaccine has been tested in several stages:

1



First they were tested in laboratories...

2



...then on animals...



3

...and then in vaccine trials on tens of thousands of people around the world, including in South Africa.

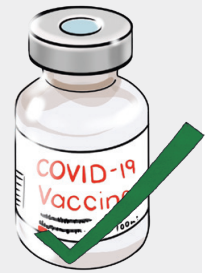


## How were the vaccine trials done?

- Some people were given the vaccine while others received an injection of saltwater.
- The people were then monitored to see who got sick with COVID and who developed any side effects.
- The vaccine developers then compared the two groups to see if the vaccine was more effective than a saltwater injection. They also checked the side effects - those that occurred more often in the vaccine group were likely due to the vaccine.

## The trials show that COVID vaccines are safe

- They do not give you COVID-19.
- The vaccine does not seem to cause any long-term harm.
- Some people get mild side effects that last 1-3 days.
- The vaccine is safe for almost everyone, even if you are frail, unwell, pregnant or breastfeeding.
- Extremely serious side effects occurred very rarely. Out of millions of people, a few have had severe allergic reactions and a rare form of blood clots.



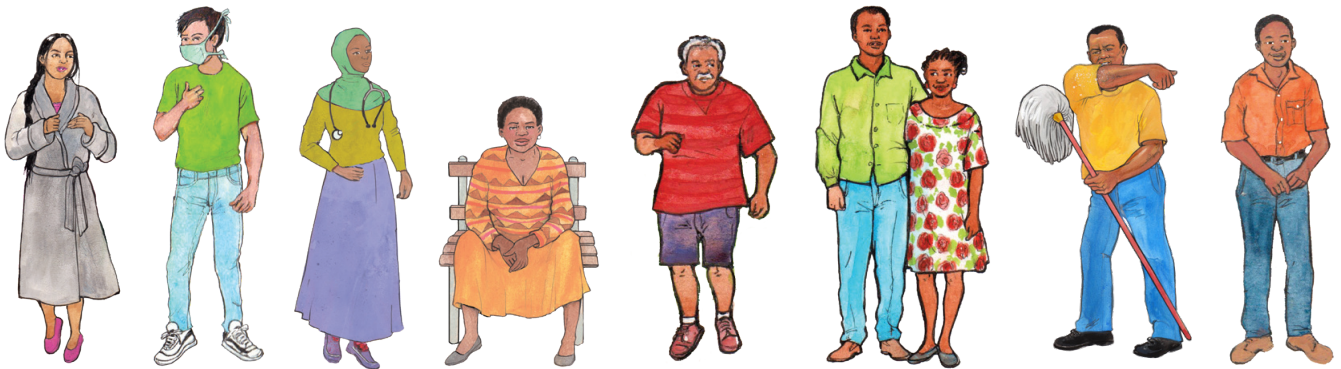
- The World Health Organisation (WHO) checks that a vaccine has been developed and tested in the correct way.
- The South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) checks and approves all health products before they can be sold.
- Both WHO and SAHPRA have approved the use of COVID-19 vaccines.
- SAHPRA are gathering vaccine safety information as thousands of people receive the COVID-19 vaccine every day.

**COVID vaccines are much safer than getting COVID-19.**

# Register to get your COVID vaccine

Our government is committed to providing COVID vaccinations for every adult living in South Africa.

- Vaccination is voluntary.
- Everyone who registers will be offered vaccination, starting with those over 60 years.



**If you want to be vaccinated, you need to register on the system. This will indicate that you want to be vaccinated and will place you in a queue to be vaccinated at a vaccination site nearest your home.**

## What do you need to register?

- Access to a device – smartphone or computer
- Access to the internet
- An ID or passport number
- A medical aid number (if you have a medical aid)
- A cellphone number where you can be contacted.



## How to register

1. To register, go to [vaccine.enroll.health.gov.za](https://vaccine.enroll.health.gov.za)
2. Enter your details as requested.
  - This will include your name, date of birth, ID/passport number and medical aid number (if you have one).
  - You will also need to indicate which vaccination site is closest to your home.
3. Submit your registration.
4. If you have a medical aid, you will need to register with your medical aid too.
5. Look out for SMSes on your cell phone:
  - You will receive an SMS confirming that you are registered.
  - When it is your turn, you will receive an SMS with your vaccination appointment date, place and time.



Registering on the system is quick and easy.  
It should take less than 3-5 minutes.

## If you have problems with registration:

- Ask someone to help if accessing a device or the internet is difficult for you.
- Perhaps a family member or friend can help.
- Ask your community leader for help finding a vaccination registration support site near you.



**If the registration process does not work correctly or you do not receive any SMS, contact the National COVID-19 hotline for help at 0800 029 999.**

# What happens when you get vaccinated?

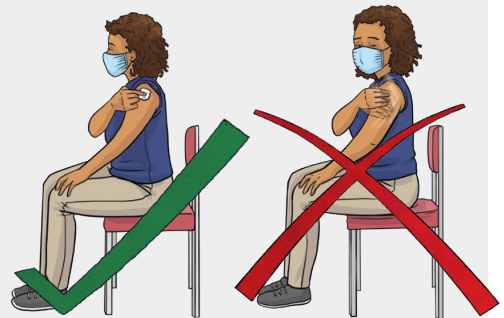
## On arrival at the vaccine site:

- Your vaccinator will check you are registered on the EVDS.
- Your vaccinator will check that you give your permission to be vaccinated.
- Wear clothing you can remove easily to expose your shoulder.
- Tell your vaccinator if you had a serious allergic reaction before, are pregnant, have a clotting or bleeding problem or take medication that might make you bruise or bleed easily.



## Getting vaccinated is quick and easy

- Your vaccinator will sanitise or wash hands before giving the vaccine.
- You will receive an injection into the muscle of your left arm, just below the shoulder. It might be a bit uncomfortable.
- Apply gentle pressure afterwards, do not rub.



## Some vaccines require one dose, most require two:

- If you receive the JnJ vaccine, you will get 1 dose.
- If you receive the Pfizer vaccine, you will need 2 doses, given a few weeks apart.



## When you are done:

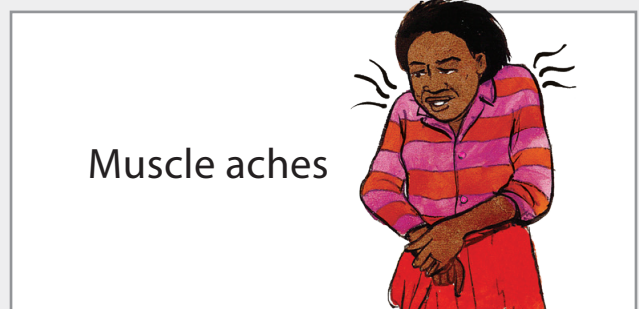
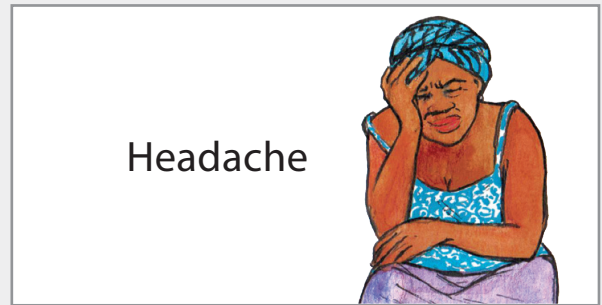
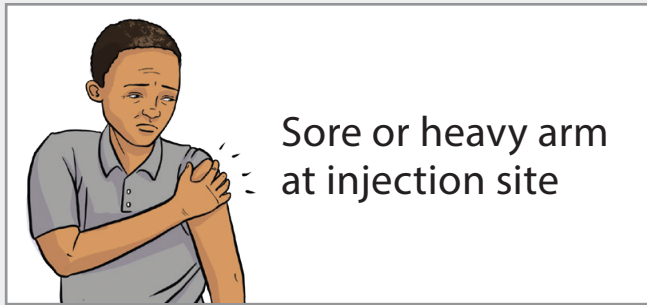
- You will need to wait for 15 minutes to check for an allergic reaction (this is very rare).
- Make sure the vaccination is recorded on your vaccine card.
- If you need a 2nd dose, check you have a return date.





# What side effects might you get?

Many people have mild side effects after getting the vaccine



- These side effects show your immune system is preparing to fight COVID-19.
- You may get them, you may not. Your immune system can still respond without giving you side effects.
- These side effects usually start around 6 hours after vaccination and last 1-2 days.
- If you need to, take paracetamol for pain or if you have fever or chills.



**If your side effects get worse or last longer than 1 week,  
contact your healthcare worker or contact  
the Western Cape Government Call Centre 0860 142 142.**

## Occasionally, vaccine side effects can be dramatic

**Some people faint as they get vaccinated. This is not serious.**

- If you suddenly feel dizzy, weak or lightheaded as you get vaccinated, lie down and put your head between your knees.
- You should recover quickly.



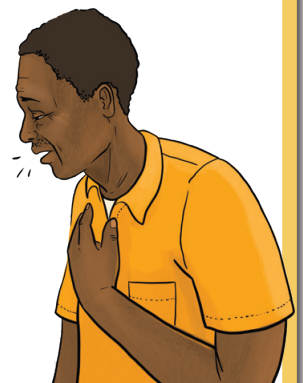
**Serious side effects are extremely rare.**

- **A few people have had an allergic reaction to the vaccine.**
  - This is more likely if you had a severe allergic reaction before.
  - An allergic reaction usually happens straight after you get the vaccine, within the first hour.
  - Health workers are trained to respond quickly to an allergic reaction, and the correct medication is available at all vaccination sites to treat it.
- **1-4 people out of a million people who got the JnJ vaccine had a serious reaction that causes the blood to clot.**
  - This can occur anytime from four days after vaccination until three weeks later.
  - Even though it is rare, there is treatment for this condition.



**Report to your health worker or phone the Western Cape Call Centre if you develop any of the following within 1 month of receiving the vaccine:**

- **A new, severe headache, especially if you have blurred vision, vomiting, weakness on one side of the body or difficulty speaking**
- **Severe abdominal pain that does not go away**
- **A rash of tiny red spots around the injection site**
- **A painful or swollen leg**
- **Chest pain**
- **Difficulty with breathing**



# Can you get COVID after vaccination?

**You may still get COVID-19. No vaccine is 100% effective.**

- You cannot catch COVID-19 from the vaccine.
- You might have caught COVID-19 before being vaccinated.
- You might catch it within the first few weeks after being vaccinated when your immune system is still being trained up to fight COVID-19.

**Even if you do get COVID-19, you are very unlikely to become severely ill or die from COVID-19.**

**After vaccination, don't confuse side effects with COVID symptoms!**

If your fever lasts more than 2 days or you develop a cough, sore throat, or changes in your taste or smell, you may have COVID-19.



Isolate yourself and arrange to get a COVID test. The test is still reliable even if you have had the vaccine.

**Contact your healthcare worker or call the Western Cape Government Call Centre 0860 142 142.**



# Remember COVID prevention measures!

- Vaccines are not 100% effective, so you might still catch COVID-19.
- Studies are still checking if the vaccine prevents spread of coronavirus.

Stay home if you are sick.



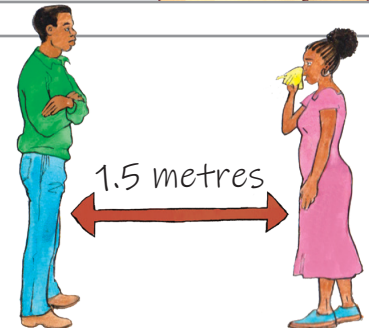
Cover your cough.



Wash or sanitise your hands often.



Keep a safe physical distance from others.



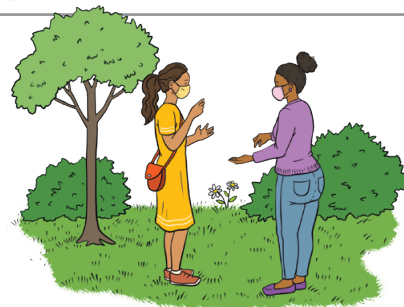
Avoid crowds and confined spaces.



Wear a mask when out in public.



Spend time together outdoors, or if indoors, open the windows.



Until most people are vaccinated, we still need to protect ourselves and each other from COVID-19, especially those at risk of severe COVID-19 – those over 55 years or with diabetes, HIV, TB, kidney disease, hypertension, chronic lung disease or cancer.

# Helplines and websites

## Coronavirus – COVID-19

National Coronavirus (COVID-19) General Public Hotline	Latest information on coronavirus (COVID-19)	0800 029 999 WhatsApp 'Hi' to 0600 123 456
Western Cape Government Call Centre	For COVID-19 health-related concerns	0860 142 142
National EVDS Self-Registration App	To register to be vaccinated against COVID-19	<a href="https://vaccine.enroll.health.gov.za">https://vaccine.enroll.health.gov.za</a>

## Getting help

Food Parcel Service – Western Cape	Food parcels for those who qualify for assistance	021 469 0235
Legal Aid Advice Line	Information and guidance on any legal matter	0800 110 110 (07:00–19:00 Monday–Friday)
Medic Alert	Assistance with application for Medic Alert disc or bracelet	021 425 7328 (09:00–16:00) 021 461 0000 (24-hour emergency line)
South African Social Security Agency (SASSA)	For information about social grants	0800 60 10 11 (toll free) GrantEnquiries@sassa.gov.za 021 469 0200 GrantsEnquiriesWC@sassa.gov.za

## Chronic conditions

Diabetes South Africa	Information, eating advice and support workshops	WhatsApp line: 081 578 6636
Epilepsy South Africa	Information, counselling and support groups	0860 37 45 37 (08:00–16:30 Monday–Thursday, 08:00–14:00 Friday)
Heart and Stroke Foundation	Information and support groups if you have had a stroke or suffer from any heart condition	021 422 1586 (08:00–16:00)
National AIDS Helpline	Counselling and information if you have HIV or are thinking of having an HIV test	0800 012 322 (24 hours)
People living with Cancer	Cancer-related queries and support	0800 033 337
Arthritis Foundation of South Africa	Information, education and support groups for those with arthritis	0861 30 30 30



## Counselling and crisis support

Lifeline National Counselling Line	Counselling for any life crisis and referral to support services	0861 322 322 (24 hours) 065 989 9238 (WhatsApp call counselling)
Childline SA (ages 0–16 years)	For children and young adolescents who are in crises, are being abused or at risk of abuse and violence	0800 055 555 (24 hours)
Gender-Based Violence Command Centre	Assistance if experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault or abuse	0800 428 428 *120*7867# from any cell phone
National Shelter Movement SA (NSMSA)	A helpline for victims of abuse or domestic violence to call and speak to a social worker	0800 001 005 (24 hours; tollfree)
TEARS Foundation	SMS helpline in cases of domestic violence, sexual assault and child sexual abuse	*134*7355# www.tears.co.za
National Human Trafficking Helpline	Reporting human trafficking	0800 222 777
Rape Crisis	Counselling and court support for rape survivors over 13 years of age	021 447 9762 (24 hours): English 021 361 9085: Xhosa 021 633 9229: Afrikaans WhatsApp line: 083 222 5164
MobieG	Live-chat counselling for teens	www.mobieg.co.za (Sunday from 18:00, Monday–Thursday from 19:00)
Safeline	Abuse counselling and court preparation	0800 035 553 (24 hours)
South African Police Services	Reporting a crime	08600 10111
Child Welfare South Africa	Reporting child abuse or neglect	0861 452 4110
Police Child Protection Unit	Reporting child abuse or neglect	10111 childprotect@saps.org.za
Family and Marriage Association of South Africa (FAMSA)	Support and education during stressful times	011 975 7106/7 national@famsa.org.za

## Alcohol, drugs and smoking

Alcoholics Anonymous	Counselling, education and support groups if you require assistance with alcohol abuse	0861 435 722 (09:30–17:00 Monday–Thursday, 09:30–15:00 Friday)
SA National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence	Support and help for people addicted to drugs and alcohol, as well as their families	0800 456 789 SMS 31393
Narcotics Anonymous (NA)	Information and support for drug addicts	0861 006 962
National Council Against Smoking Quitline	Information and support to stop smoking	011 720 3145 082 840 3548

## Mental health

South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG)	Counselling and support if you have depression or anxiety	0800 456 789 SMS 31393
Suicide Crisis Line	For any suicide-related support	0800 567 567 (08:00–20:00) SMS 31393 and a counsellor will call back
Cape Mental Health	Counselling, support, rehabilitation, training and re-integration programmes	021 447 9040 (08:00–16:30 Monday–Friday)
Mental Health Helpline	Counselling and support if you have a mental illness	0800 12 13 14 (24 hours) SMS 31393 and a counsellor will call back
CIPLA 24-hour Mental Health Helpline	Helpline for mental disorders, anxiety, depression and suicide	0800 456 789 WhatsApp line: 076 88 22 77 5
Dementia SA	For support, awareness, training and information on dementia	0860 636 679 (24 hours) 021 421 0078 <a href="http://www.dementiasa.org">www.dementiasa.org</a>







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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Knowledge  
TranslationUnit  
University of Cape Town LUNG INSTITUTE



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