



Why and how do we get sick?

When we get sick from a virus, it means our bodies are fighting something that isn't supposed to be there. Some viruses can get into our bodies through the air, when we breathe through our mouths and our noses. Once the germs get inside, they want to make themselves at home—viruses use our own cells (the building blocks of our bodies) to help them make copies of themselves. When they make these copies, it can damage our cells, but it helps the virus continue to spread.

Why do I feel unwell when I am sick?

When you are sick, many of the symptoms you feel (fever, runny nose, cough) are your body's ways of trying to fight back and get rid of the viruses. This is why many different illnesses have similar symptoms—it's your body fighting back!

How do we prevent illness?

Washing hands frequently and wearing face masks are great ways to stop a virus from getting into our bodies in the first place. If we do get sick, they are also great ways to help us prevent infection from spreading to others.

How do vaccines work? What's special about mRNA vaccines?

Vaccines help our immune systems train to fight off illness. The immune system is a series of defenses our body has to help get rid of infection. When you get a fever, that's one sign that your immune system is hard at work fighting off infection!

Vaccines introduce our bodies to something that can help the immune system learn to recognize an illness without having to actually get infected. We may get some symptoms, like aches or chills or fevers, because our bodies are learning to fight off an illness, even if we are not actually sick. These side effects are usually mild and go away after a day or two.

Some vaccines use a modified or dead version of a virus so our bodies learn what to look for, but others do not. The COVID-19 vaccines that are commonly available include new mRNA vaccine technology. The vaccine introduces a set of instructions to our bodies on how to make a protein that looks like part of the COVID-19 virus, but can't make us sick. Our immune system still learns how to recognize the COVID-19 virus and how to fight back in a way that keeps us safe and makes it easier for us to fight off infection if we are exposed in the future, sometimes before we even feel sick!



What is Herd Immunity?

Because our immune systems can only learn how to fight off something they recognize as a problem, vaccines are really important when it comes to protecting not only ourselves but also our loved ones. Not everyone can get a vaccine—some people with other health conditions might have allergies or other illnesses that mean they can't get their own vaccine, and some people might have other illnesses that make it harder for their immune system to fight off infection even if they have the vaccine.

We can think of a community of people living in a region as one group working together to fight back against illnesses like COVID-19. Think of the vaccine and the virus like an umbrella in the rain: we can't stop it raining outside, but we can take certain measures to protect ourselves.

If it's raining and you have your own umbrella, you're more protected from getting wet. It's the same for vaccines! If you have your own vaccine, you're more protected from getting sick.

For the people who can't get a vaccine, it's like they don't have an umbrella. They might get wet in the rain if they're on their own.

What would happen if 100 people all stood in the rain with no umbrellas? This is like what happens when we don't have vaccines available—everybody is at risk.

What would happen if 100 people stood in the rain, and half of them had umbrellas? Some would stay dry, but there's a greater chance of everyone getting at least a little splashed. This is like what happens when not everyone chooses to get a vaccine—more people are at risk than just those without umbrellas of their own.

But what would happen if 100 people stood together outside in the rain, and 99 of them had their own umbrellas? The one person without an umbrella could get enough coverage by sharing with others that they probably wouldn't get that wet! We call this idea "herd immunity," and it's important that as a community, we all get ourselves protected if we can so that we can help protect the people who don't have that option for themselves.

How do I get a vaccine?

You can find a local clinic using [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov). Enter your zip code to find the closest available vaccines.

What do I need to provide to get vaccinated?

If you have previously been vaccinated, you will need to bring your vaccine card with your record. If not, just yourself and your mask will do. You may be asked for your name, and insurance information (insurance is not required). The Covid-19 vaccination is free.

4450 Park Avenue • Bridgeport, CT 06604 • 203.416.3521 • www.shudiscovery.org

*The Discovery Museum, Inc. is designated by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS)
as tax-exempt as defined in section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code.*



You will also be asked to answer questions about your health and wellness to determine if you are eligible (allergies, age, medical conditions).

What happens next?

Depending on which vaccine you receive, you will return to get a second dose, and later a booster.

Communities for Immunity is made possible with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Institute of Museum and Library Services. For more information, visit www.communitiesforimmunity.org.