



How to boost your immune system: Suggested talking points

- **We develop immunity—[protection from infection](#)—when our immune systems recognize a particular virus, bacteria, or fungus and destroy it.**
 - In utero, babies can acquire passive immunity to certain infections from [antibodies](#) (protective proteins) from their birthing parent through the placenta. After birth, babies can get antibodies from breast milk.
 - We acquire active immunity when we're exposed to germs, either by getting infected or by [getting vaccinated](#), which teach our bodies how to fight off future infections.
 - Passive immunity only lasts for a few weeks or months, while active immunity lasts longer.
- **Immunity helps you resist and fight diseases and protects you against becoming seriously ill, but it's not perfect.**
 - If you've had an illness or you've been vaccinated against a particular disease, you could get infected again but still be protected from developing the worst, and sometimes deadly, symptoms. Immunity might wane faster if the pathogen causing the disease mutates quickly, like the viruses that cause COVID-19 and the flu. That's why we need updated COVID-19 and flu vaccines to target newer variants.
 - When more people get vaccinated against vaccine-preventable diseases, it's better for everyone. [Herd immunity](#) occurs when enough people have immunity so that [disease spread is dramatically reduced](#).
 - For example, diseases like measles, mumps, and rubella are rare in the U.S. because we've achieved herd immunity.
 - Recent outbreaks of measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases are due to [a decline in vaccination rates](#), which puts herd immunity at risk.
- **Staying up to date on routine vaccines is an effective way to protect ourselves and build herd immunity.**
 - In addition to helping to prevent infection in babies, children, and adults, routine vaccines reduce the risk of severe illness, hospitalization, and death from dangerous diseases.
 - All vaccines are rigorously tested before becoming available to the public to ensure safety.
 - Getting vaccinated is a safer way to build immunity than getting infected with any disease.
 - Learn more about routine vaccines [for children](#) and [for adults](#) from the CDC.



How to boost your immune system: Frequently asked questions

1. What is immunity?

We develop immunity—[protection from infection](#)—when our immune systems recognize a particular virus, bacteria, or fungus and destroy it.

In utero, babies acquire passive immunity to certain infections [from antibodies](#) (protective proteins) from their birthing parent through the placenta. After birth, babies get antibodies from breast milk. Passive immunity only lasts for a few weeks or months.

We acquire active immunity when we're exposed to germs, either by getting infected or by [getting vaccinated](#), which teach our bodies how to fight off future infections. If you've had an illness or you've been vaccinated against a particular disease, you could get infected again but still be protected from developing the worst, and sometimes deadly, symptoms—especially if the pathogen causing the disease mutates quickly, like the viruses that cause COVID-19 and the flu. That's why we need updated COVID-19 and flu vaccines to target newer variants.

2. What is herd immunity?

[Herd immunity](#), also known as community or population immunity, occurs when enough people have immunity against a disease [to dramatically reduce the spread](#). For example, diseases like measles, mumps, and rubella are rare in the U.S. because we've achieved herd immunity through mass vaccination. Herd immunity protects all of us, especially infants and children who are too young to be fully vaccinated and adults who are unable to get vaccinated.

Recent outbreaks of measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases are attributed to [a decline in vaccination rates](#), which jeopardizes herd immunity.

3. How do vaccines help our immune systems fight off infections?

Vaccines teach our immune systems how to recognize invaders and attack them before they make us seriously ill. Since some viruses mutate quickly and evade our immunity, we need updated vaccines to help us stay protected.

This season's COVID-19 and flu vaccines [are available now](#) and specifically target current variants. They are recommended for everyone 6 months and older. Find pharmacies near you at [Vaccines.gov](#).