FAQS ABOUT THE NEW NOVAVAX COVID-19 VACCINE

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine as an additional option for adults ages 18 years and older receiving a primary series of COVID-19 vaccination. Staying up to date on COVID-19 vaccination is an effective way to protect people from getting very sick or dying from COVID-19 and an important strategy for students, staff, and faculty on college campuses to minimize disruption to living and learning.

How does the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine work and how is it different from other kinds of COVID-19 vaccines?

The Novavax COVID-19 vaccine is a protein subunit type vaccine. This means it contains pieces (proteins) of the virus that causes COVID-19. It also contains an ingredient called an adjuvant which helps train the immune system to respond to the COVID-19 virus in the future. The Novavax vaccine does not contain any live COVID-19 virus and cannot cause COVID-19 infection. Protein subunit vaccines, including the hepatitis B and whooping cough vaccines, have been used for many years in the United States and elsewhere. Other COVID-19 vaccines use messenger RNA (mRNA) or other viral genetic material to teach our immune systems to create antibodies to the COVID-19 virus.

How is the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine administered?

The Novavax COVID-19 vaccine is administered in two doses, three to eight weeks apart. Similar to other COVID-19 vaccines, it is given as a shot in the upper arm, and both doses are required to receive maximum protection.

Is the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine safe?

Protein subunit COVID-19 vaccines, including Novavax’s, have been rigorously tested for safety and efficacy before being approved for use in the United States by the Food and Drug Administration. The Novavax vaccine also received conditional authorization from the European Commission and the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2021 and is being used in Canada, Australia, India, and other countries. If you have questions about whether you should receive a COVID-19 vaccine, contact a campus health professional or other health care provider you trust to discuss your specific concerns.

How well does the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine work?

Clinical trials demonstrate that the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine reduces the risk of severe illness and death associated with COVID-19. However, studies from other COVID-19 vaccines have shown that protection declines over time especially with the Omicron variants. All FDA-approved or authorized COVID-19 vaccines provide substantial protection against hospitalization and death associated with COVID-19.
Is the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine better than other COVID-19 vaccines?

The Novavax COVID-19 vaccine uses a method of producing an immune response in the body that has been used for decades in the United States. Some people who have not yet been vaccinated against COVID-19 may feel more comfortable with this type of vaccine. The Novavax vaccine is easier to store and ship than other types of COVID-19 vaccines and may be more useful for communities that are harder to reach or don’t have adequate refrigeration facilities.

Will I experience side effects from the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine?

As with other COVID-19 vaccines, some people experience mild to moderate side effects for a day or two after getting the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine. Side effects are more common after the second dose. Serious side effects, including myocarditis and pericarditis, are rare. The risk of developing myocarditis from COVID-19 remains higher than the risk of developing it from a COVID-19 vaccine. If you are concerned about allergic or other reactions, contact a campus health professional or other health care provider you trust to discuss your specific concern.

Where can I get the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine?

The Novavax COVID-19 vaccine will be available in the near future. You can find a COVID-19 vaccine near you at Vaccines.gov.

Can I get the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine as a booster dose?

At this time, the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine is recommended for the primary series only. It is not authorized for use as a booster dose. Approval as a booster dose is a separate process.

Who should I talk to if I have questions about COVID-19 vaccination? Where can I get more information that I can trust?

If you have questions about whether you should receive a COVID-19 vaccine, contact a campus health professional or other health care provider you trust to discuss your specific concerns. Good sources for information about COVID-19 vaccination include the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, your state or local health department, and community-based health organizations with expertise in medical care and vaccination.

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American College Health Association
8455 Colesville Road, Suite 740, Silver Spring, MD 20910 | 410-859-1500 | contact@acha.org
www.acha.org