



Vaccine Facts for Hindu Faith Communities

What do faith leaders say about the ethics of receiving a vaccine?

“Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu” This universal Hindu prayer means – “May all beings everywhere be happy and free, and may the thoughts, words, and actions of my own life contribute in some way to that happiness and to that freedom for all.”

After review of the available data, we advise that all eligible individuals consider getting an available vaccine in order to protect themselves as well as the greater community around them. – Chinmaya Mission Portland

Dharmic point of view and vegetarianism

The two mRNA vaccines that are available in the U.S. — **Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna** — are not produced using fetal cells.

No fetal cells are used to make them, which means that there are no fetal cells in the injection you receive, and fetal cells are not used in the development process either. Viruses need living cells to grow. Researchers have developed “cell lines” of living cells that reproduce themselves indefinitely in the laboratory, and they are used to grow viruses. Early in the research phase of these COVID-19 vaccines, a fetal cell line was used to test that the active ingredient, messenger RNA, worked as intended. The tests showed that messenger RNA, when introduced into human cells, produces the viral protein that makes us develop immunity against the virus that causes COVID-19.

The **Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech** vaccines in the U.S. do not contain any ingredients that come from animals. There are no pig or cow products in these vaccines. They contain messenger RNA, water, sugar, salts and lipids (fats) that are not derived from animals.

The other vaccine, the **Johnson & Johnson** vaccine uses a virus (“Adenovirus 26”) that cannot reproduce itself. When this virus is introduced into human cells, they produce the same viral protein as the other vaccines, which makes us develop immunity to COVID-19. Producing this vaccine virus does require the use of a “fetal cell line” or cells grown in a laboratory from old fetal cells from the 1970s, specifically PER.C6 to develop the viral vector that’s needed for the vaccine, but the final vaccine does not contain fetal cells or culture cells.

What is a fetal cell line? Fetal cell lines are grown or “cultured” in laboratories from cells originally taken from fetal tissue. They can be grown indefinitely. COVID-19 vaccine developers have used two historic fetal cell lines when testing or manufacturing vaccines:

- HEK-293 — A kidney cell line that was isolated from a fetus around 1972
- PER.C6 — A retinal cell line that was isolated from a terminated fetus in 1985

Producing vaccines that rely on these cell lines does not require new abortions, because the cells reproduce themselves indefinitely in the laboratory. [This chart lists](#) some COVID-19 vaccines in development and whether and how they use these fetal cell lines at any point in their development process. It is important to note however, that none of the vaccines themselves contain fetal cell lines.

Frequently asked questions

Is the vaccine safe? Yes. The Food & Drug Administration (FDA) requires rigorous safety testing before it will approve any vaccine. Tens of thousands of people — including Oregonians — from many backgrounds, ages and communities of color, participated in vaccine testing. These studies were done to make sure the vaccines meet safety standards and protect people of different ages, races and ethnicities.

Is it safe to get a COVID-19 vaccine if I have an underlying medical condition? Yes. COVID-19 vaccination is especially important for people with underlying medical conditions like heart disease, lung disease, diabetes and obesity. People with these conditions are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19. People with these medical conditions were also part of vaccine research.

What about side effects? According to the FDA, the most common side effects in the COVID-19 vaccine trials included pain, redness or swelling at the injection site, fatigue, headache, chills, muscle pain and joint pain. These reactions mean the vaccine is working to help teach your body how to fight COVID-19 if you are exposed. For most people, these side effects will last no longer than a few days. If you have any concerns, call your doctor or nurse. Is there a microchip in the vaccine so the government can track me? COVID-19 vaccines don't contain a microchip to track people. Vaccine shipping boxes are tracked, as any other shipment, to make sure they're distributed where needed and to prevent theft. There is also a record of where you got your vaccine to make sure you get all your doses.

Is the vaccine safe in pregnancy or breastfeeding? Although the vaccines have not yet been studied in pregnancy, they do not contain live viruses, and experts recommend vaccination in all phases, preconception, pregnancy and post pregnancy. Moreover, pregnant people tend to get more serious illness from COVID-19 than do people who aren't pregnant, and they are more likely to be hospitalized and to need intensive care. For these reasons, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that COVID-19 vaccines be offered to pregnant people. Similarly, although there are no data on COVID-19 vaccines in lactating persons, they are not thought to be a risk to breastfeeding infants, so lactating persons may choose to be vaccinated. If you have additional questions about getting vaccinated, it's good to discuss them with your healthcare provider. Learn more about pregnancy and COVID-19 vaccines [here](#).

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