

*"For safety's sake—do something."*

## COVID-19 Vaccination Stages

Now that the COVID-19 vaccines are arriving, people are starting to dream. "As soon as my five closest friends and I get the shot, I'm spending a weekend at a cabin with them. No masks, no social distancing." "Realistically, it's definitely not going to be an on / off switch on normal," said Eleanor Murray, a Boston University epidemiologist. Stage 1 is what you can safely do once you and your close friends or family are vaccinated. Stage 2 is what you can safely do once your city or state has reached herd immunity, where enough people are protected against infection that the virus can't easily spark new outbreaks. Stage 3 is what you can do once herd immunity is reached internationally. In the meantime, even vaccinated people have to assume they can still become infected and pass along the virus. That means they need to keep wearing masks and social distancing whenever they're around unvaccinated people.

### **Stage 1: You and Your Close Friends or Family are Vaccinated**

Vaccines don't work instantly. "You need to wait a minimum of two weeks after the first shot to see any kind of protection, but really you need to wait at least a week after the second shot," said Angela Rasmussen, a virologist affiliated with Georgetown University.

### **Stage 2: Your City or State has Reached Herd Immunity**

In public settings, Americans should continue with masking and social distancing until 75 to 85 percent of the population is vaccinated, according to Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Once a jurisdiction reaches immunity, people there will be able to safely return to venues like schools, movie theaters, and indoor dining at restaurants (though of course state and local governments have been making these decisions throughout the pandemic, weighing the indispensability and risks of different venues).

Stage 2, for that reason, is not the time for international travel to countries that have not yet achieved herd immunity or that have little healthcare infrastructure.

### **Stage 3: Herd Immunity is Reached Internationally**

There's a good chance we won't reach this stage until 2022 or later. Access to vaccines is far from equal around the world.

How long it takes for various countries to reach herd immunity will depend in part on how fast they can access vaccines and what share of their populations are willing to get the shot.

Visit [Mayo Clinic](https://www.mayoclinic.org/centers-for-disease-control) / [Centers for Disease Control](https://www.cdc.gov/) for additional information on vaccines.



*Gauri, 10, was the winner in the 2020 annual safety coloring contest in the 10 to 12 year-old category.*

*The son of an SSOE employee, Gauri wants us to remember that keeping up with the measures we know to curb the spread of the virus - like masking and social distancing - is the best way to ensure we can all get back to normal faster.*