



Vaccine Facts for Catholic Faith Communities

Do COVID-19 vaccines contain fetal tissue?

While fetal cell lines may be used to develop or manufacture COVID-19 vaccines, the vaccines themselves do not contain any aborted fetal cells or fetal tissue.

The **Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna** vaccines are not produced using fetal cells. Fetal cells were used in the early development and testing of these vaccines.

- 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 development 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 **Johnson & Johnson** vaccine is produced using a fetal cell line.

- 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, specifically PER.C6.

What is a fetal cell line?

Fetal cell lines are grown 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. tinyurl.com/420cndxg

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

In a [December 11, 2020, statement](#), the **U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops** said, “In view of the gravity of the current pandemic and the lack of availability of alternative vaccines, the reasons to accept the new COVID-19 vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna are sufficiently serious to justify their use, despite their remote connection to morally compromised cell lines.”

The bishops said that a vaccine using adenovirus grown in fetal cell lines should be avoided if there are alternatives available; but that if one does not have a choice of vaccine without a lengthy delay in immunization it would be permissible to accept it.

The bishops further noted that taking the vaccine is “an act of charity toward the other members of our community.” They encouraged Catholics to request uncompromised vaccines as they become available. [tinyurl.com/522snzv5](https://www.tinyurl.com/522snzv5)

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.

Can I choose which vaccine I get? While vaccine supply remains limited, you may not have a choice of which COVID-19 vaccine you can receive. Until our vaccine supply increases, the best vaccine for you is the one you can get.

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.

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