



Vaccination information  
for Natives by Natives

# Vaccines 101



**As Native people our traditions have guided us through many challenges.** To thrive, our communities have worked hard to protect each member, including our most vulnerable. Today, one way we can protect ourselves and our community is by getting vaccinated.

This handout is designed to help you weigh important vaccination decisions so you can take care of yourself and your community.



“ I want people to get vaccinated. Doing so allows everyone to be healthier, including the small handful of people who can't get vaccinated due to allergies or other health conditions. In a traditional sense, it is our responsibility to take care of each other by getting vaccinated. ”

-Gretchen LaDue, Elder and Cowlitz Tribal Member

## Vaccines

Vaccines protect us from diseases like the flu and measles. Each vaccine goes through several rounds of testing, which takes years and thousands of volunteers. During vaccine testing, important questions are considered, like “Is the vaccine safe?” and “How does the body react to it?”

Once a vaccine is approved, everyday people who got the vaccine share how it made them feel. This is an important part of making sure that vaccines are safe for everyone.

## How vaccines work

Within our bodies, each of us has warrior cells that stand guard and attack diseases. Vaccines help our warrior cells see and fight disease. For example, when we get the flu shot, the ingredients in the shot tell our warrior cells how to recognize and fight the flu. That is why if you get a flu shot, you are less likely to get sick with the flu. Getting vaccinated can also reduce the seriousness of illness if you happen to get sick.

“ Tribes and Native people have helped at every step in fighting against diseases through doing things like participating in vaccine trials. At Lummi Nation we participated in the Novavax vaccine trials. We are proud to have participated in this effort, but more importantly we are proud of our people. ”

- Nick Lewis, Lummi Nation Tribal Leader





“ When enough of the community is vaccinated, we can attain broad protection for everyone, which is vital because certain people, like babies and Elders, may not be able to get every vaccine. When we get vaccinated, we protect our most vulnerable. ”

– Dr. LaKota Scott, ND, Medical Provider and Navajo Nation Tribal Member

## Community protection

When we are vaccinated, it is less likely that we will get sick. It is also less likely that we will make others sick.

## Side effects

You may experience side effects from vaccines, like fever or soreness. Most side effects are mild and go away within a few days. Mild side effects are a good sign that your warrior cells are preparing to be able to recognize and fight disease.



“ There is so much misinformation out there. I would urge our relatives to arm themselves with updated knowledge about vaccines, their safety, and their effectiveness. ”

– Dr. Jeffrey Henderson, MD, MPH, Lakota & Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, President and CEO of the Black Hills Center for American Indian Health

Sometimes people make the mistake of thinking that having mild vaccine side effects means that they are “getting sick with the disease.” This is not true. Vaccines do not make you sick with the disease you are getting vaccinated against.

## Protecting our future

Acting in ways that honor our past, present, and future is important to the wellbeing and survival of our community. Part of our duty to future generations involves caring for our own health.

## Where to get vaccinated

To get vaccinated contact your local Tribal clinic, IHS facility, or visit a local pharmacy or clinic.

## VacciNative

This handout was developed by VacciNative – a project dedicated to creating accurate vaccine information for Native people by Native people. We do this by gathering info from trusted Elders, Native health professionals, and other experts.

All of our materials are reviewed by the VacciNative Alliance, a collaboration of staff from Tribal Epidemiology Centers across the nation.

## Additional information

For additional information, check out [www.IndianCountryECHO.org/VacciNative](http://www.IndianCountryECHO.org/VacciNative). For questions, contact us at [VacciNative@npaihb.org](mailto:VacciNative@npaihb.org).

“ Getting vaccinated protects us, our families, and our communities for generations to come. Vaccines will ensure our people’s survival. ”

– Clarice Charging, Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation Elder

