Just had the COVID-19 vaccine?
Well done and thank you for protecting yourself!

Western Cape Government

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Side effects are common. Here’s what to look out for.

Arm is sore or red at the injection site.

- Fever/chills
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Muscle aches
- Nausea
These side effects show your body is building an immune response.

The technical term for this is ‘reactogenicity’. If you do not get side effects it does not mean that your body is not building an immune response.

- Side effects can start around 6 hours after the vaccine, peak at 24 hours and resolve in 2-3 days.
- If you need to, treat pain and fever with paracetamol.
- Side effects may be more noticeable if you are young, healthy or had COVID-19 before.
Contact your healthcare provider or the COVID-19 hotline if:

• Your side effects are severe or last longer than 3 days.

• You develop any of the following symptoms within a month of vaccination:
  - New-onset severe headache especially if with blurred vision, vomiting, weakness on one side of the body or difficulty speaking.
  - Severe abdominal pain that does not go away.
  - A rash of tiny red spots around the site of injection.
  - A painful or cold leg.
  - Chest pain or shortness of breath.
Extremely rare side-effects affect 1-4 people per million vaccinated. They include a severe allergic reaction called anaphylaxis (within minutes to hours) and a rare form of blood clots (between 4 days and 3 weeks).
Some vaccines are given in 2 doses (for example Pfizer-BioNTech COVID vaccine).

The second dose is important to boost your body’s immune response to the vaccine and help its protective effect last longer.
Keep your vaccine card safe.

This is your proof of vaccination.

Keep your follow-up appointment if you have one.

• You cannot catch COVID-19 from the vaccine as there is no live coronavirus in it.

• It is still possible to get COVID-19 as no vaccine is 100% effective.

• You might have caught COVID-19 before being vaccinated (it can take up to 14 days before COVID-19 symptoms start).

• You might catch it within the first 2 weeks after being vaccinated while your immune system is being trained up to fight COVID-19.
After vaccination, don’t confuse vaccine side effects with COVID-19 symptoms.

- If your fever lasts more than 2 days or you develop a continuous cough, sore throat, or changes in your ability to taste or smell after your vaccination, you may have COVID-19.
- Isolate yourself and arrange to get a COVID test. Contact your healthcare provider or the COVID-19 hotline.

Even if you do get COVID-19, you are very unlikely to get severely ill or die from COVID-19.
Don’t forget COVID-19 prevention.

We still don’t know if the vaccine will stop the spread.

• Wear a mask in public.
• Keep apart from others outside your home as much as possible.
• Avoid crowds and confined spaces – have small gatherings outside.
• Wash or sanitise your hands regularly.
• As a healthcare worker, continue to wear standard PPE at work.