Q: Has the Johnson & Johnson vaccine received Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) from the FDA?
A: Yes, the FDA has ruled that the Johnson & Johnson vaccine meets the requirements for EUA.

Q: How does the Johnson & Johnson vaccine work?
A: According to the company, unlike the existing mRNA vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna vaccines), which use messenger RNA to create a protein that prompts an immune response in the body, the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine uses an adenovirus — a type of virus that causes the common cold — that has been made unable to replicate. The adenovirus carries a gene from the coronavirus into human cells, which then produce the coronavirus spike protein, but not the coronavirus itself. This spike protein is what primes the immune system to fight off a subsequent infection by the virus. This is analogous to the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines in that it is a carrier plus some genetic instructions; only the technical details are different.

Q: How effective is the Johnson & Johnson vaccine?
A: The vaccine had a 72% overall efficacy rate in the U.S. and 64% in South Africa, where a highly contagious variant emerged in the fall and is now driving most cases, according to information recently released by the FDA and reported by the New York Times. The vaccine also showed 86% efficacy against severe forms of COVID-19 in the United States, and 82% against severe disease in South Africa. That means that a vaccinated person has a far lower risk of being hospitalized or dying from COVID-19. In addition, the vaccine also was 74% effective at preventing asymptomatic infection, which might mean it could help reduce transmission of the virus.

Q: How many doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine are required?
A: The Johnson & Johnson vaccine requires one dose.

Q: What are the side effects?
A: Similar to the side effects of the existing COVID-19 vaccines, initial safety information released for the vaccine shows that the most common reactions after the vaccine was administered included injection site pain, fatigue, headaches and muscle aches. Nobody in the clinical trial needed to be hospitalized for COVID-19 or died from the disease.

Q: Is there an age restriction for the Johnson & Johnson vaccine?
A: In the clinical trials, the vaccine was tested on individuals 18 years of age and older.

Q: Is the Johnson & Johnson vaccine safe for pregnant people?
A: Similar to the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine, the Johnson & Johnson vaccine was not tested on pregnant individuals. The company notes that there was no concerning pattern of [adverse events] in the pregnancies initiated around the time of vaccination.
Q: What is unique about the Johnson & Johnson vaccine?

A: Johnson & Johnson has used the adenovirus before in its Ebola vaccine and in investigational vaccines for HIV and RSV, so there is a lot of long-term safety data for it.

Q: Does the Johnson & Johnson vaccine offer any storage challenges?

A: The vaccine technology Johnson & Johnson used can remain stable for two years at -4° F, and for at least three months at 35-46° F, which is about the temperature of a home refrigerator, according to the company. This may make the Johnson & Johnson vaccine easier to distribute in the long run.