Here’s how to join a COVID-19 vaccine trial

Vaccine makers are going to need thousands of volunteer testers over the next few months.

As with any clinical trial, these new vaccines are experimental, so they may not work. And thousands may also be in the placebo group, so they will have no extra protection against the virus. There’s also a risk of nasty side effects, but clinical trial participants may feel good about doing something concrete to fight COVID-19.

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While many agree that health-care workers and those at high risk for medical reasons should get the first doses, [NIH director Francis] Collins said he thought those who have joined vaccine trials and wound up in placebo groups should also be considered as well.

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The gateway to several of the trials is the COVID-19 Prevention Network (CoVPN) at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle. It brings together several long-standing clinical trial networks and is working with the federal government’s Operation Warp Speed. People who want to join a trial can register online with the network. It is developing a Spanish-language site, a spokesperson said. Each trial will be looking for 30,000 participants who represent a variety of ages, races, and medical conditions. Once people register, studies will contact them about joining. Pharmaceutical companies may be working with academic sites, commercial trial sites, or less traditional centers to administer the vaccines.

Close to 200,000 people have registered since registration opened on July 8.

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