NORTH Dakota | Health & Human Services
Be Legendary.

How to Access VAERS Data

Before evaluating VAERS data it is important to understand the benefits of the VAERS system as well as its limitations.

VAERS accepts reports of adverse events that occur following vaccination. Anyone, including healthcare providers, vaccine manufacturers, and the public, can submit reports to the system. **While very important in monitoring vaccine safety, VAERS reports alone cannot be used to determine if a vaccine caused or contributed to an adverse event or illness.**

VAERS reports may contain information that is incomplete, inaccurate, coincidental, or unverifiable. Reports to VAERS can also be biased. As a result, there are limitations on how the data can be used scientifically.

Key considerations and limitations of VAERS data:

- **The number of reports alone cannot be interpreted as evidence of a causal association between a vaccine and an adverse event,** or as evidence about the existence, severity, frequency, or rates of problems associated with vaccines.
- Reports may include incomplete, inaccurate, coincidental, and unverified information.
- VAERS does not obtain follow up records on every report. If a report is classified as serious, VAERS requests additional information, such as health records, to further evaluate the report.
- VAERS data are limited to vaccine adverse event reports received between 1990 and the most recent date for which data are available.
- VAERS data do not represent all known safety information for a vaccine and should be interpreted in the context of other scientific information.

VAERS data available to the public include only the initial report data to VAERS. Updated data which contains data from medical records and corrections reported during follow up are used by the government for analysis. However, for numerous reasons including data consistency, these amended data are not available to the public.

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Options to Access VAERS Data

VAERS data is accessible two different ways: by downloading raw data in comma-separated value (CSV) files for import into a database, spreadsheet, or text editing program, or by use of the CDC WONDER online search tool.

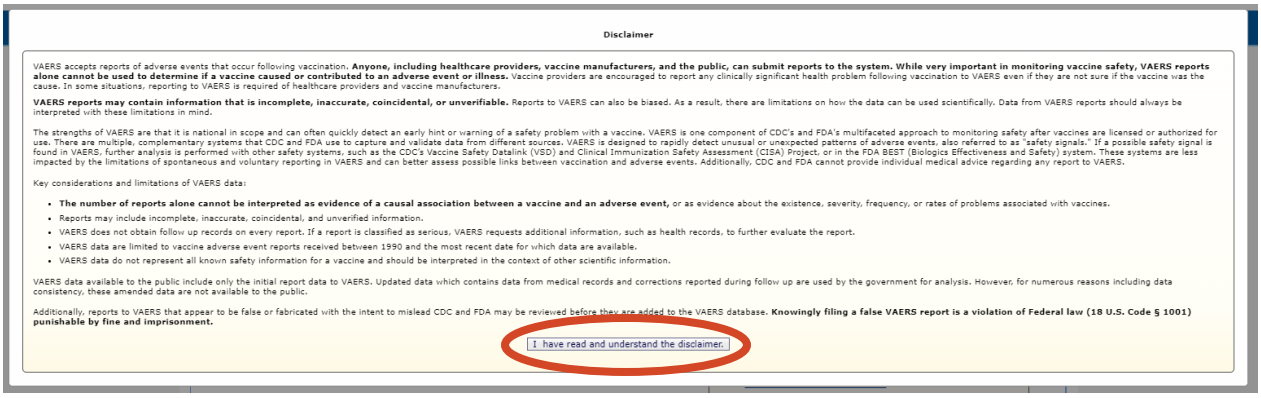
Instructions for accessing VAERS Data using CDC Wonder

For the purposes of these instructions, we will be pulling information on the number of people in North Dakota who have had an Adverse Event reported to the VAERS system after COVID-19 vaccine from January 2023 – May 2023.

Additional Information about accessing VAERS data using the CDC Wonder application can be found on the CDC website.

1. Go To https://wonder.cdc.gov/vaers.html

2. Read the VAERS Disclaimer and click I have read and understand the disclaimer once you have done so.



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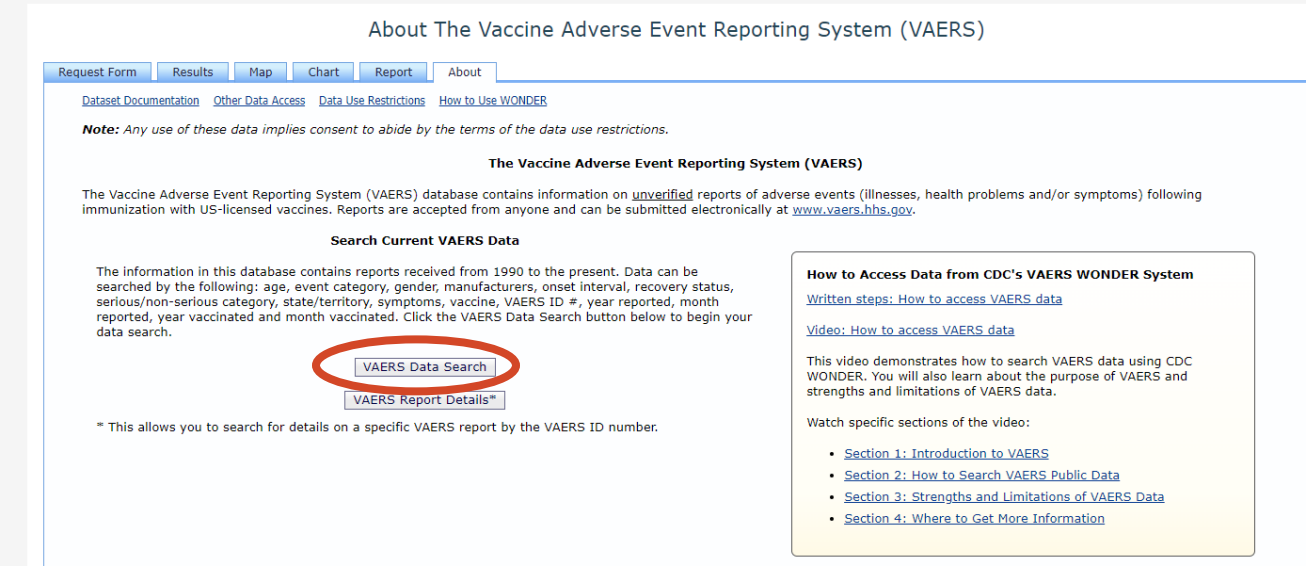
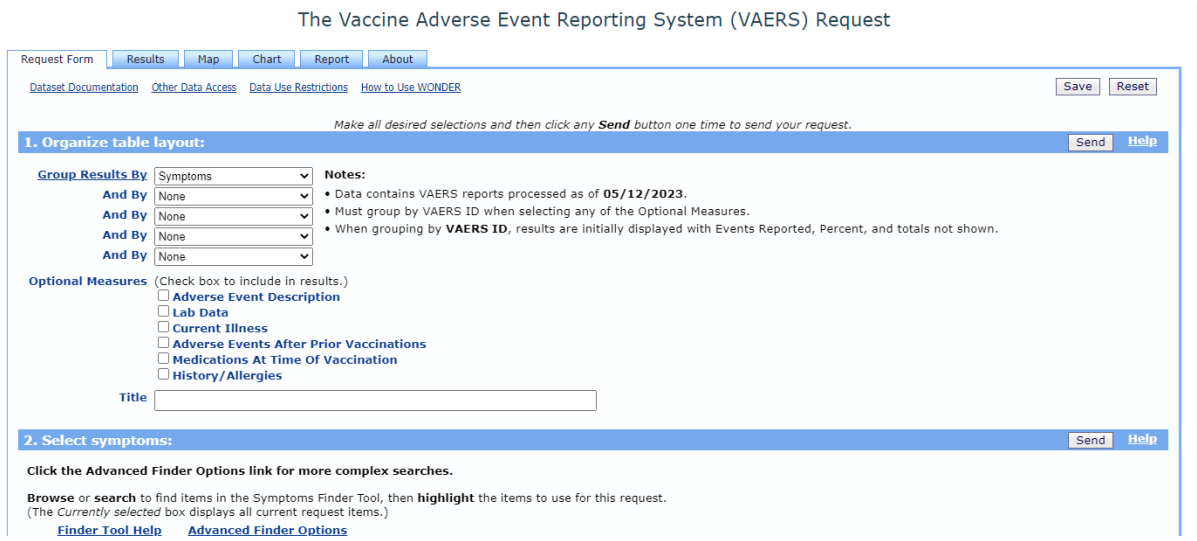
3. You will be taken to the "About VAERS" page. To start your search, click on VAERS Data Search.



You will be taken to the page below where you can start your search.



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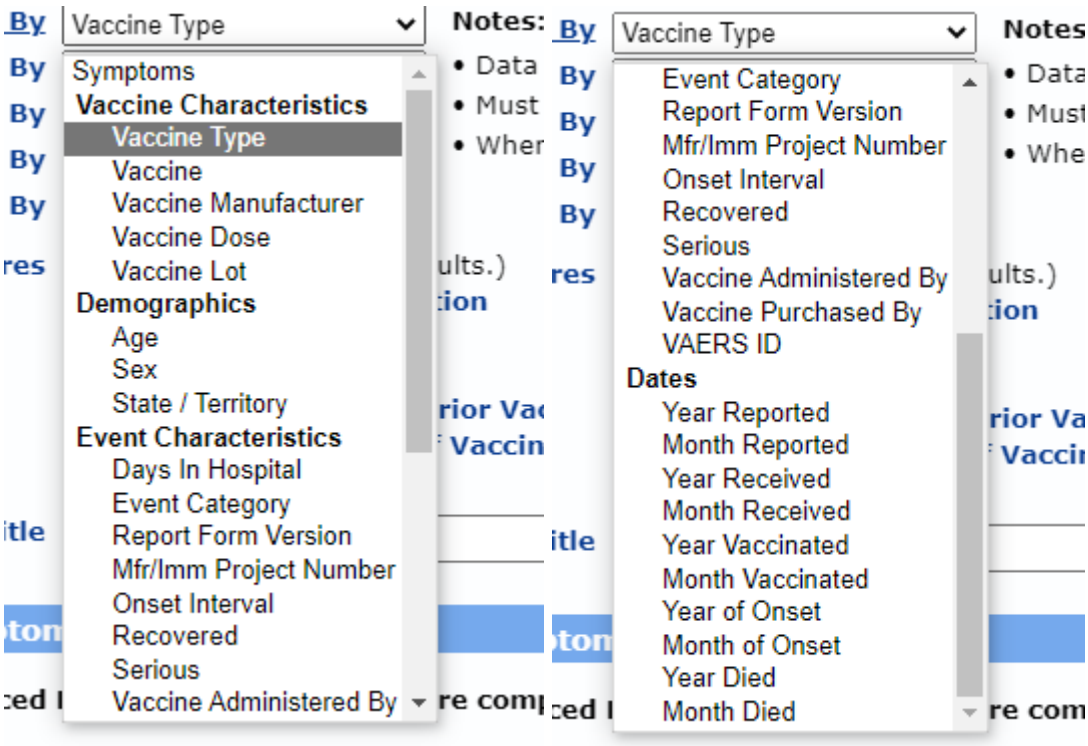
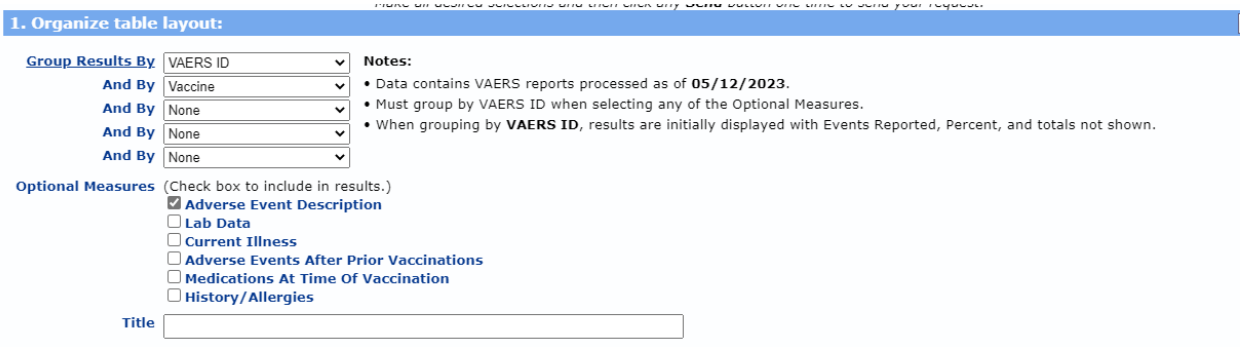
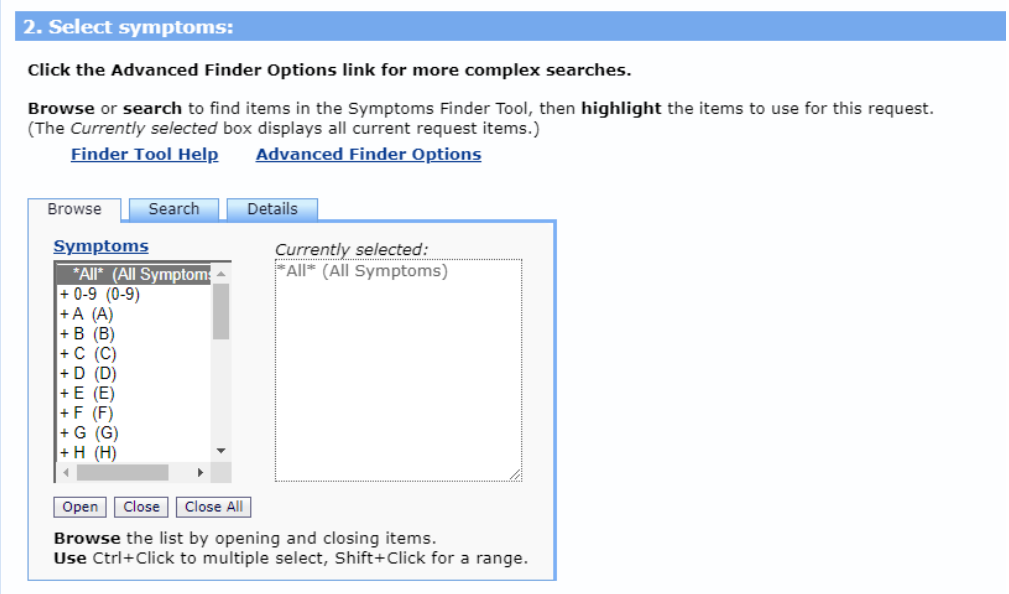
4. Choose which variables you wish to include in your results. Clicking the down arrow will show all of your options shown below. Please note that it is very easy to include duplicate events when accessing VAERS data. An individual can have multiple symptoms assigned to their one VAERS ID which can quickly inflate the event numbers.



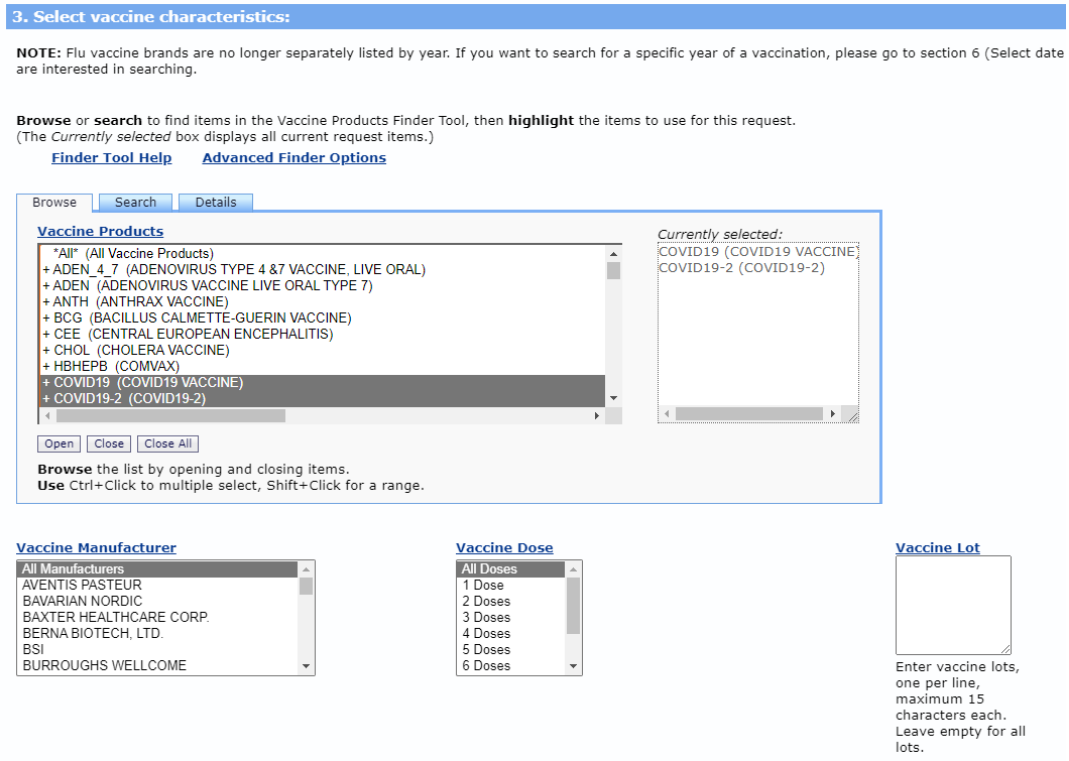
For the purposes of these instructions we will select VAERS ID in the first box under Group Results By (to avoid duplicates), Vaccine to show which COVID-19 vaccine a person received, and select Adverse Event Desciption under Optional Measures.



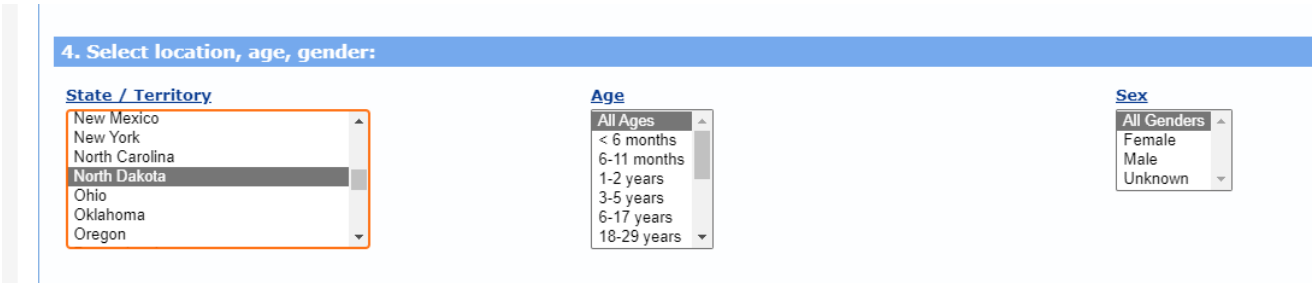
5. Scroll down to Select Symptoms where you can choose symtpoms to search for. To search for specific symptoms, click on the Search tab. Select the terms you want to use for your search. As you highlight a term, it is moved to the Currently Selected box on the right side of the screen. To select more than one term, hold down the Control key. To select a range of terms, hold down the Shift key. If you do not select specific symptoms it will default to All Symptoms.



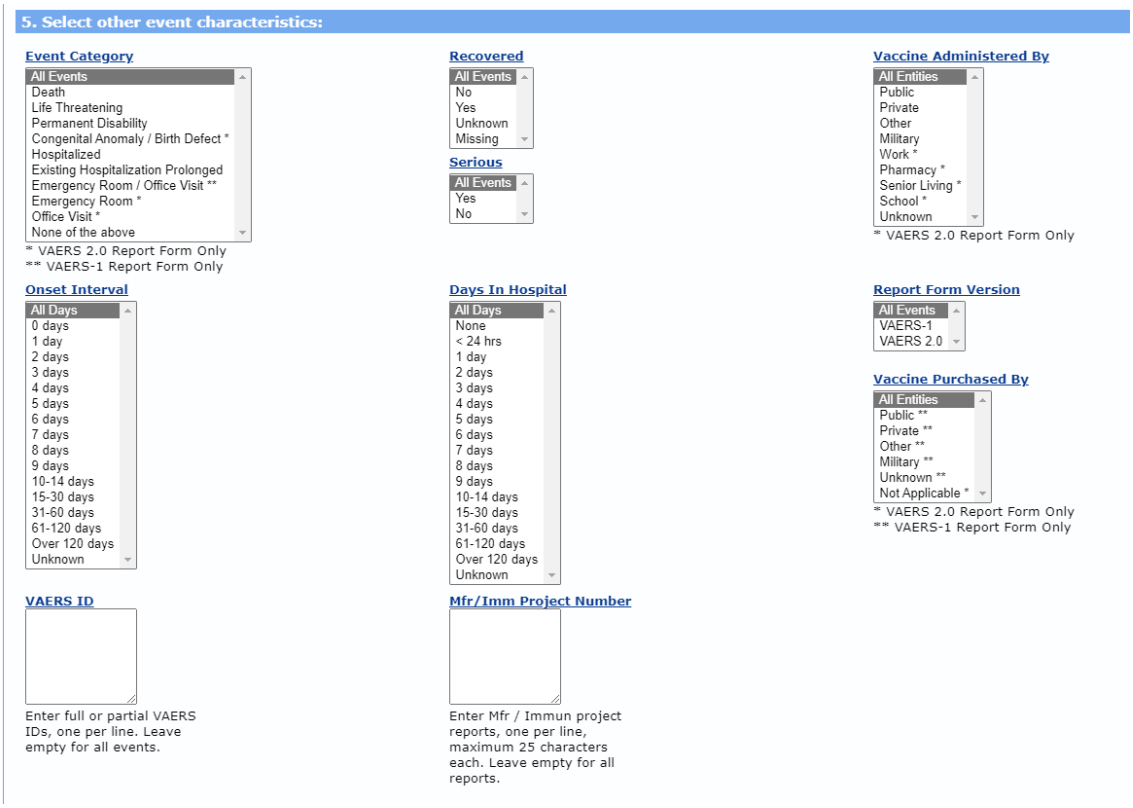
6. Scroll down to Select Vaccine Characteristics. When a vaccine is highlighted it moves to the Currently Selected box on the right side of the screen. You can also search for vaccine manufacturer, vaccine dose number, and vaccine lot number. If you don't select any, it will default to all manufacturers, all doses, and all lot numbers. Options to select in this section are listed below.
    a. Vaccine Products – Vaccine type and vaccine
    b. Manufacturers – makers of vaccine products
    c. Vaccine Dose – number of vaccine doses given for a vaccine
    d. Vaccine Lot – manufacturer's lot number for a vaccine product. The lot number is the id number the manufacturer assigns to a batch of vaccine.



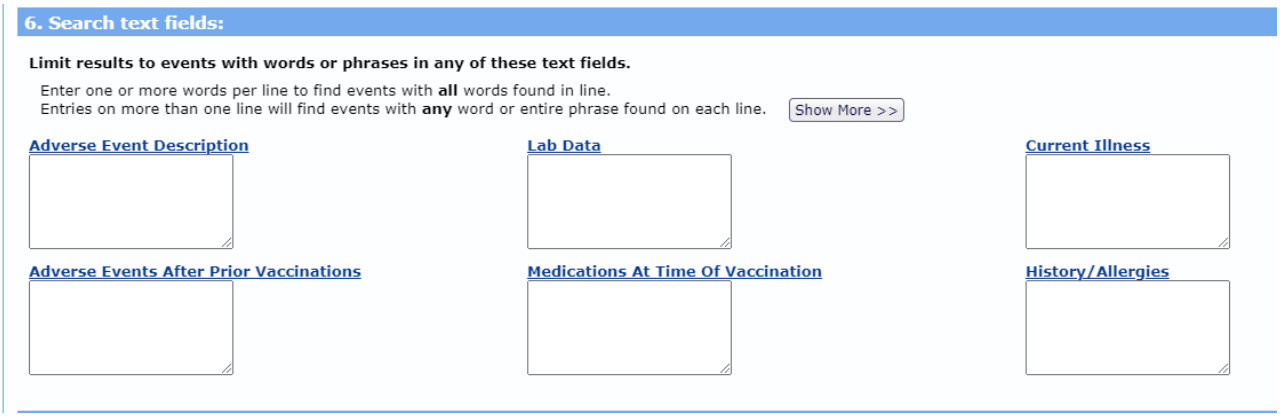
7. Scroll down to Select Location, Age, and Gender, which allows you to select specific locations, ages, and genders. If you don't select anything, it will default to all U.S. states and territories, all ages, and all genders.



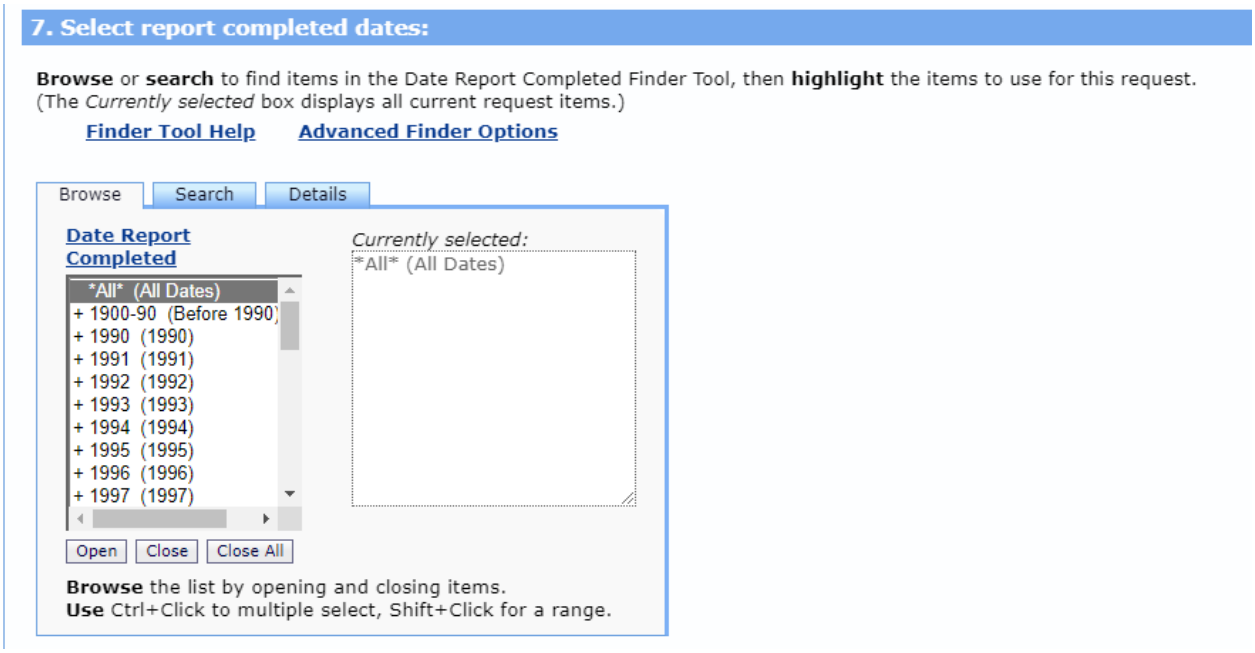
8. Scroll down to Select Other Event Characteristics, which allows you to select characterics of the adverse event you're interested in. If you don't select anything it will default to all adverse events. Options to select in this section are listed below.
    a. Event Category - describes the outcome of the event
    b. Recovered - indicates if the patient recovered from reported adverse event
    c. Vaccine administered by – What kind healthcare provider administered the immunization
    d. Onset interval – number of days after immunization when reported symptoms of event occurred.
    e. Days in Hospital-number of days hospitalized
    f. Report From Version – version of VAERS form that was filled out
    g. VAERS ID – unique identification number of VAERS report
    h. Mfr/Imm Project number - Manufacturer/Immunization Project Number, when applicable. Leave this box empty if you don't wish to limit your search to specific project numbers.



9. Scroll down to Search Text Fields. In this section, you can search for exact words that appear in each section of the VAERS report.



10. Scroll down to Select Report Completed Dates, which allows you to search for a specific date that a VAERS report was completed. If you don't select anything, it will default to all dates in VAERS, from 1990 to the present.



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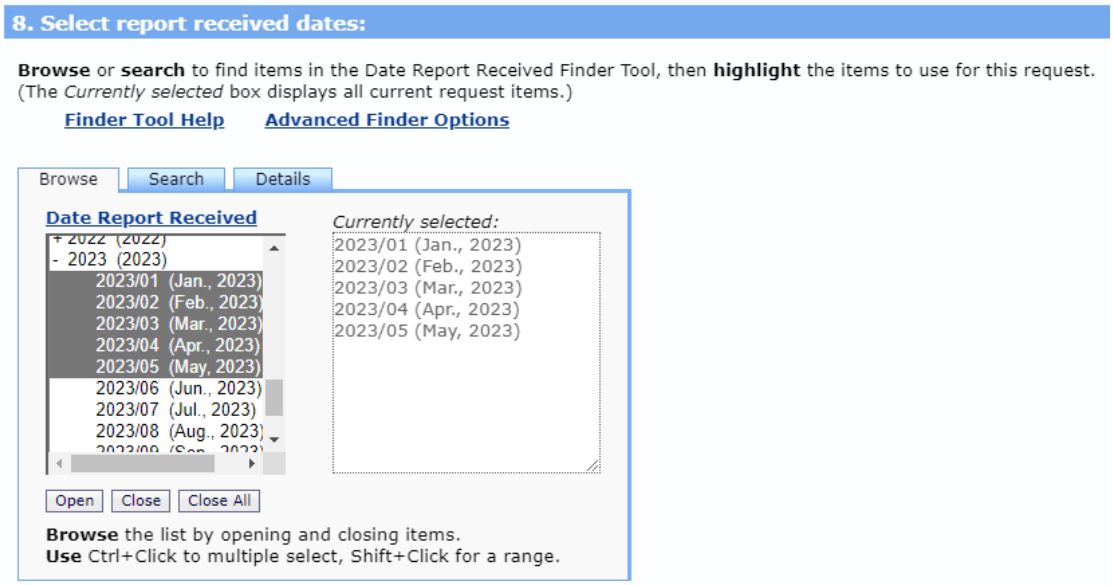
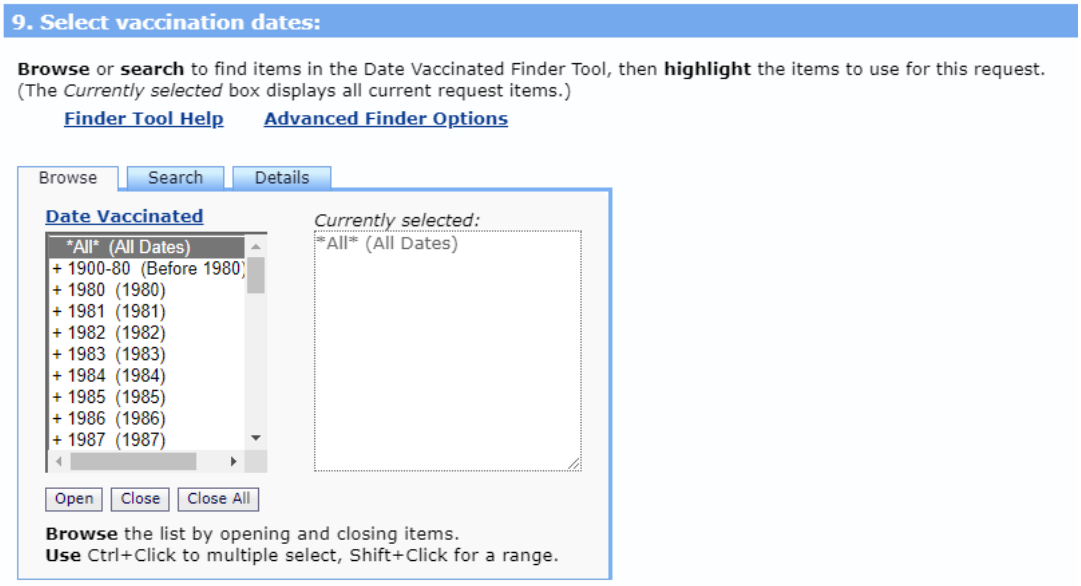
11. Scroll down to Select Report Received Dates, which allows you to search for specific dates that reports were received by VAERS. If you leave don't select anything, it will default to all dates in VAERS.



12. Scroll down to Select Vaccination Dates, which allows you to search for specific dates when persons were vaccinated. If you don't select anything, it will default to all dates in VAERS.



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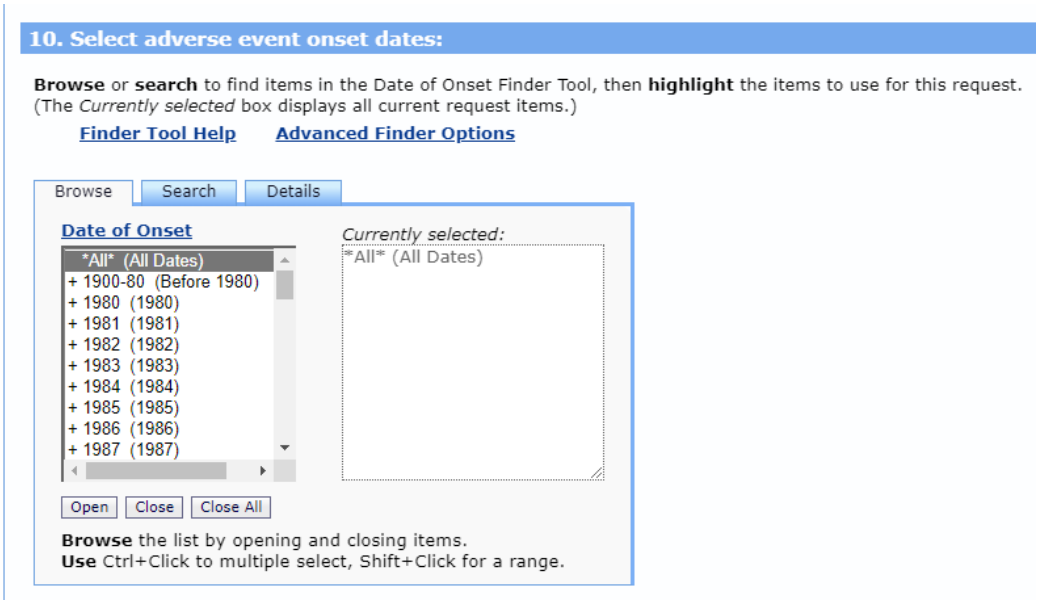
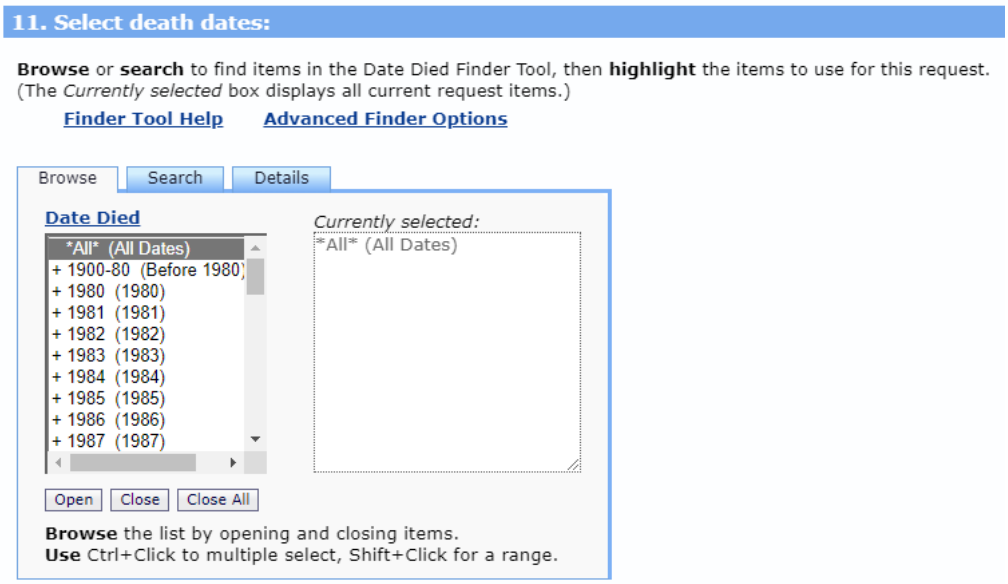
13. Scroll down to Select Adverse Event Onset Dates, which allows you to search for specific dates when an adverse event occurred. If you don't select anything, it will default to all dates in VAERS.



14. Scroll down to Select Death Dates, which allows you to search for a specific date when a death occurred. If you don't select anything, it will default to all dates in VAERS.



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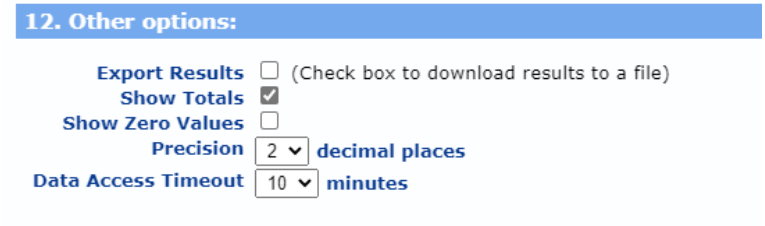
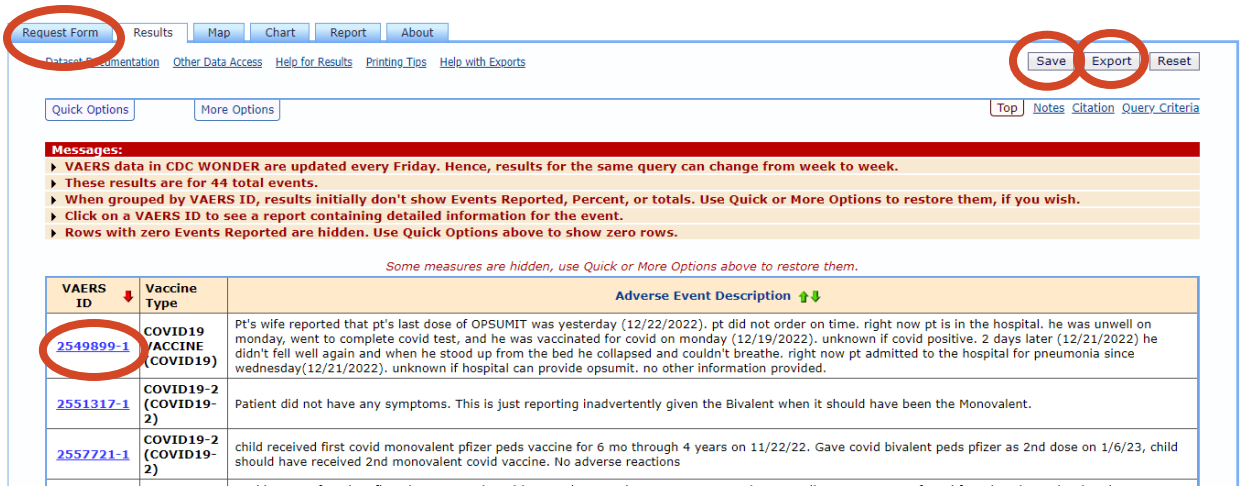
15. Other Options allows you to choose how your results will appear.
    a. Export Results: If checked then results are exported to a file.
    b. Show totals: If checked totals and subtotals will apear in results table
    c. Show Zero Values: If checked rows containing zero values will apear in the results table.
    d. Precision: Select the precision for the percentage calculations (if applicable).
    e. Data Access Timeout: Value specifies the maximum time to wait for the data access for a search to complete.



16. Press any of the Send buttons on the page. Your search results will appear on the screen.

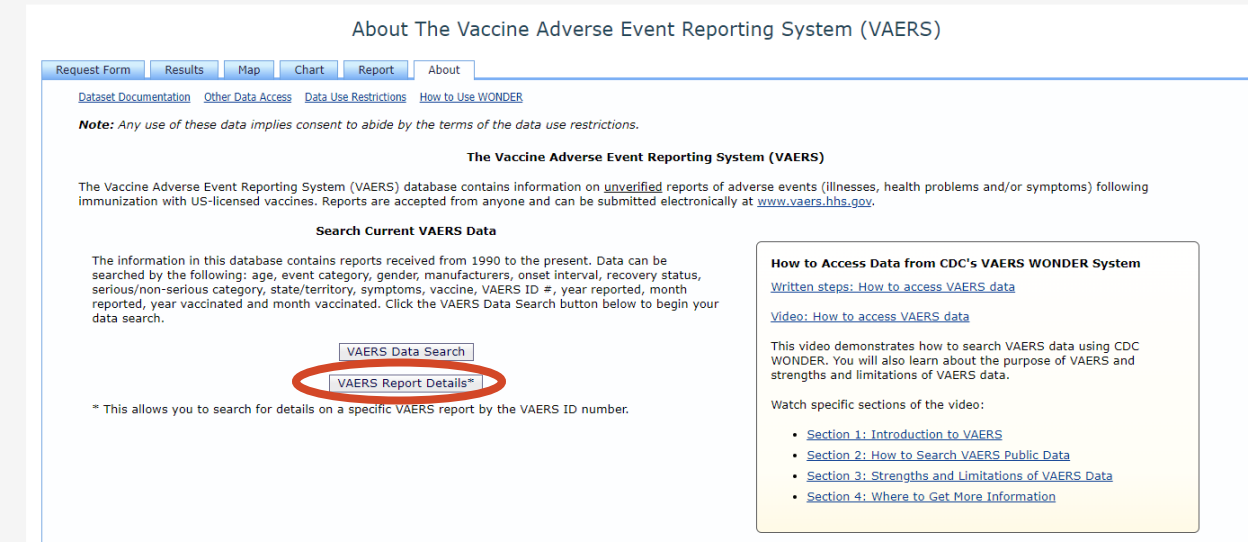
17. Results appear as a table. Below are additional options that can be selected after the table is visible.
    a. To export results into a xxxx file click export.
    b. To learn more about an individual VAERS report click the VAERS ID
    c. To adjust the information you requested go back to the request form.
    d. To save the query click save and follow the instructions.



VAERS Event Details Report

This report can be utilized when you know a VAERS ID and want to see information specific to that event.

1. Select the VAERS Report Details button on the About page.



This takes you to the Report tab and shows the “Event Details Report” page.

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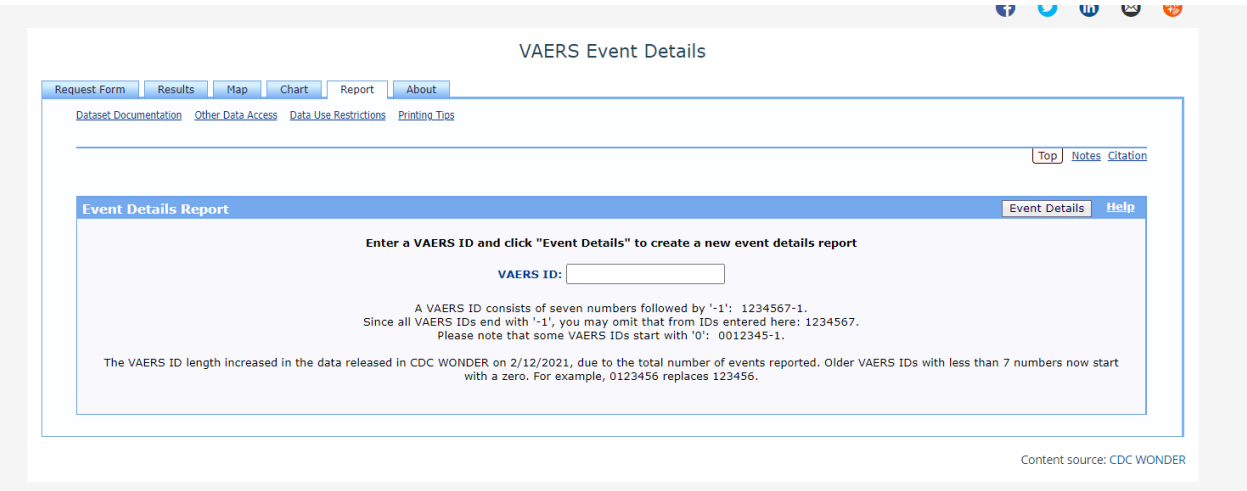
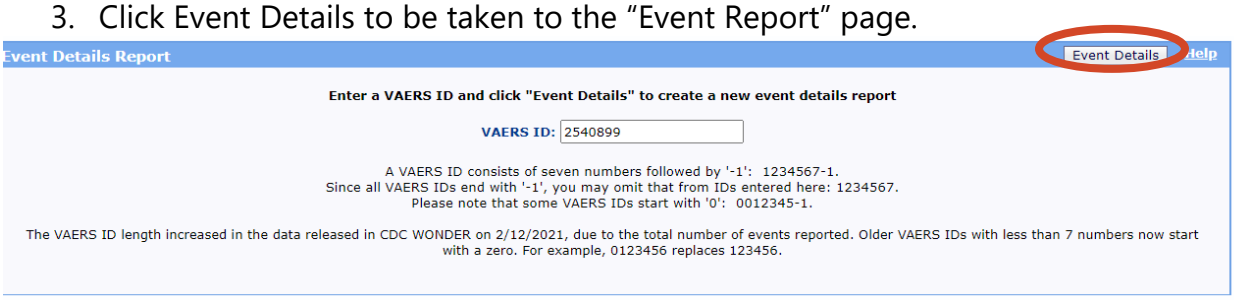


2. Enter a VAERS ID into the box. Remember the following VAERS ID information.
    a. VAERS ID consists of seven numbers followed by '-1': 1234567-1.
    b. Since all VAERS IDs end with '-1', you may omit that from IDs entered here: 1234567.
    c. Please note that some VAERS IDs start with '0': 0012345-1.

3. Click Event Details to be taken to the "Event Report" page.



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