



NEWS RELEASE

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March 8, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COVID-19 VACCINATION SIDE EFFECTS MEANS GOOD NEWS FOR YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

Sterling, Colo. – March 8, 2021: There are now three vaccines available with FDA Emergency Use Authorization and soon all adults over 18 will have the opportunity to be vaccinated. Now is the time to become more educated on these vaccines, the possible side effects and why this is all good news for our immune system and our community as a whole.

The fastest way to end the pandemic and get back to some sense of a normal life, is attaining herd immunity. Herd immunity will be achieved when a significant portion of the population becomes immune to COVID-19 and lowers the risk of infection for everyone. Vaccinations are one of the most effective tools we have in achieving this goal and are a normal part of wellness, from childhood immunizations to annual flu shots, vaccines are proven to protect health and prevent disease.

Compared to the flu, which kills an average of 60,000 people a year, COVID-19 has killed over 500,000 since January 2020 and has proven to cause severe medical complications, sometimes leading to hospitalization and death. Moreover, there is no

way to know, until you are sick, how COVID-19 will affect you. Many are experiencing long-term illnesses and side effects that last much longer than those who have been impacted by influenza. Additionally, COVID-19 is highly contagious especially to those who are in contact for more than 15 minutes such as family, friends and coworkers. Being vaccinated protects those you care most about, particularly people at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

Scientists have used only ingredients that are safe and effective to create the two types of COVID-19 vaccines available. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines were created using mRNA. mRNA are temporary pieces of genetic code from the virus that stimulates your body's immune response into making virus-fighting antibodies. The new Johnson & Johnson vaccine uses a modified adenovirus (a type of virus that causes the common cold) that can't replicate or cause illness, as a vehicle to deliver instructions to cells on how to fight the virus. Since neither of these methods contain a live COVID-19 virus, it's impossible to catch COVID-19 from getting vaccinated. However, you may have some side effects, which are actually normal signs that your body is building protection.

Each individual's experience will differ depending upon his or her body's immune response, but higher numbers of people have mentioned experiencing greater discomfort after their second dose. These side effects are not unique to the COVID-19 vaccine, in fact being inoculated for shingles can cause similar symptoms to what has been experienced with the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines. However, they are short term, and should resolve in a few hours up to a few days. In that time, you may experience symptoms such as pain or swelling at the injection site, low-grade fever, chills, joint pain, tiredness, headache and nausea. These flu-like symptoms people are encountering are caused by the body's response to a foreign invader. The fever and

muscle aches come from inflammation, a sign that immune cells are sending out an alarm, dispatching cells and molecules to memorize the features of the invader. After the first dose of the vaccination, this immune response is fast but can be short lived. Stimulated anew by the second dose, these immune cells blast out a second level of alarm, building upon the first. It's basically a knee jerk reaction by the immune system and its way of taking the infection even more seriously. Therefore, if the immune system ever encounters the true COVID-19 virus, it will be fought off effectively and swiftly.

Here is an analogy to help explain: imagine seeing a stranger sneaking around your neighbor's house one evening. You might be a little unnerved and you are more watchful, but you don't panic. The first dose of the vaccine is like this for your body – your immune system takes notice and begins to be more attentive. The next night, after speaking to your neighbors and possibly even hearing of some break-ins in the area, you see the intruder again. This time you are alarmed and call the police. Your body is reacting the same way to the second dose. This time it's even more primed and ready to start producing a very big immune response, which is what is happening when people experience stronger side-effects following the second dose.

However, if side effects such as redness or tenderness at the injection site increases after 24 hours or if your side effects become more severe, or do not seem to be going away after a few days, contact your healthcare provider.

There is a very remote chance that you could experience a severe allergic reaction. Like the other side effects, it is an immune reaction but begins within minutes of exposure and can cause a dramatic drop in blood pressure, face or throat swelling, bad rash and difficulty breathing. This sort of anaphylactic reaction is easily treated and vaccine

recipients who experienced it have all recovered. For this reason, everyone receiving the vaccination is required to sit and be monitored for 15 minutes after inoculation even though fewer than 5 people per million vaccinated seem to experience this sort of severe reaction.

If you want to help track side effects and share your experience with getting the COVID-19 vaccine, enroll in v-safe, a voluntary smartphone-based tool that uses text messaging and web surveys to check in with people who have been vaccinated. This health checker is monitored by the CDC to identify potential side effects of the COVID-19 vaccinations. For more information on how to sign up, visit: www.cdc.gov/vsafe.

Some people's immune systems are very reactive and loud, while others are quieter. However, it doesn't mean that both aren't hard at work. Like everything, it just depends on the person's immune response. But for everyone, it will take a week or two after your final dose to build complete protection. The vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna will require a 2 dose series and you will need both in order to achieve full immunity. In the end, it will require about 65% of the population having antibodies, either from being sick with COVID-19 or from being vaccinated to end this pandemic. Until then, we still need to do our part to prevent the spread. So it's important for everyone to continue using all the tools available as we learn more about how COVID-19 vaccines work in real-world conditions. Remember to practice your W's: wear a mask, watch your distance and wash your hands.

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