



Main Line Health®

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Dr Lawrence - COVID-19 Vaccine | Dec 2020

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COVID-19 Vaccine - What We Know Now for Those Not Yet Vaccinated

By now you have probably learned that this week the COVID-19 vaccine by Pfizer has received full and final approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). This ensures public confidence in the safety, effectiveness, and quality of the vaccine. To date there have been over 5 billion COVID vaccine doses given around the world across 183 countries including about 170 million fully vaccinated Americans.

We understand that some of you may still be concerned about the safety of these new vaccines so I would like to clarify some facts as we approach what will be mandatory vaccination of long-term care staff and will be required of nursing facilities by the government. This is in part because the Pandemic continues with almost 40 million cases and 631,000 deaths in the US.

Is COVID-19 still active in our community?

COVID infection is currently causing another surge nationwide due to the Delta variant. The Delta variant is much more contagious—two times more transmissible than the original strain. It is also felt to cause more severe infection than earlier strains. Hospitalizations and deaths related to this new strain are rising each day. Unvaccinated persons are at very high risk of becoming infected and at risk for severe infection and death.

Vaccine Questions:

Is the vaccine effective?

The COVID vaccines are effective in both preventing infection and are over 90% effective in preventing severe infection, hospitalization, and death. Vaccination has also been found to be effective in prevention and minimizing infection with the Delta variant. Although infections can still occur, they have been shown to be not as severe in vaccinated persons.

Is the vaccine more protective than having had COVID-19 infection?

The immunity provided by vaccination appears to be more durable and protective than having had the infection and recovered. Vaccination following previous infection has also been found to enhance protection against the new variant strains including the Delta variant. So, if you have had previous COVID infection you still need the vaccine.

Is the vaccine safe?

We now have the experience of billions of vaccinations given and it has been shown to be safe with very rare serious side effects—I have seen none in the thousands of patients, residents, staff, friends, and family that I have seen vaccinated. Although minor side effects are more common, all of us have tolerated them.

Is it safe in pregnancy?

CDC recommends that pregnant people should be vaccinated. Vaccination is felt to be safer than the risk of getting COVID infection while pregnant. In addition, there is no evidence that the vaccination can cause fertility problems in women or men.

The COVID-19 vaccine cannot give you COVID-19 infection. The vaccine works by helping the body create antibodies and an immune response to fight off the virus. Feeling discomfort after getting the vaccine means that your immune system is responding to the vaccine and that it is doing its job and your body is making protective antibodies.

As we have been saying over the course of this difficult Pandemic—we are all in this together. Please join us in getting vaccinated to avoid illness from this viral infection that is still a killer. Thank you.

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