

Hello Family,

I know although many of you are understandably concerned about the Covid19 virus, you may also have concerns about the safety and effectiveness of the currently available vaccines. Because both currently available vaccines are considered safe and are over **94% effective**, most medical providers and medical agencies such as the CDC, NMA (NATIONAL MEDICAL ASSOCIATION-WHICH IS THE LARGEST ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN PHYSICIANS IN THE U.S) AND ACOG (AMERICAN COLLEGE OF OB/GYN) RECOMMEND VACCINATION WITH ONE OF THE CURRENTLY AVAILABLE COVID19 VACCINES. Below is some information specific to the COVID vaccines.

Can the Covid19 vaccine make me sick with the Covid19 virus?

No, the currently available vaccines do not contain “live” Coronavirus. They work by triggering our immune system to recognize the virus and then mount an immune response.

What should I expect at the time of COVID-19 Vaccination / How to prepare for COVID-19 Vaccination?

Please wear a face mask covering your mouth and nose and maintain social distancing while waiting for the vaccine. Your upper arm should also be easily accessible. You will review a questionnaire about the COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccine will be administered into the upper arm of your choice. Generally, you will need to remain in a waiting area for a minimum of 15 minutes after you receive the vaccine to monitor for any reactions to it. Before you leave, you should schedule your second COVID-19 vaccine. This will occur approximately 3 or 4 weeks after your first dose, depending on the vaccine you receive. You will be scheduled to receive the same brand of COVID-19 vaccine as you receive for your first dose.

Are there side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine?

Based on data from clinical trials, the COVID-19 vaccines were generally well-tolerated with no serious safety concerns. Common side effects reported to date include injection site reactions, local pain, fatigue and headache. Less common reactions are fever, muscle aches, chills, swollen lymph nodes and joint pain. Most of these side effects have been mild to moderate in severity and are gone within 1-2 days after the vaccination. These side effects may be more pronounced after the second dose. Most of these side effects are a positive sign that the vaccine has activated your immune system. You can take acetaminophen (Tylenol) for post-vaccine fever, headache or muscle aches.

I have had coronavirus – should I receive the coronavirus vaccine?

Because many people who have had COVID-19 have gotten it again, experts recommend that you get the vaccine even if you have had the virus. COVID-19 infection may offer some natural protection (immunity), but experts don't know how long this protection lasts. The vaccine can work with your immune system to help your body fight off the virus if exposed again and provide longer-lasting immunity than natural infection. You can receive the vaccine after you recover from the COVID-19 virus and have completed your quarantine.

I am pregnant/breastfeeding – do you recommend that I receive the COVID 19 vaccine?

There is limited safety data about the use of current COVID-19 vaccines in women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, but based on the mechanism of mRNA vaccines, it is expected to be safe. Pregnant patients with COVID-19 are at increased risk for potential complications for both the mother and fetus. Current information suggests that the potential benefits of vaccination generally outweigh the risks for patients who are pregnant, breastfeeding or planning pregnancy. As you decide whether to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, you may also consider your personal risk of contracting COVID-19 from your job or other activities, your personal risk of COVID-19 severe illness, as well as the current level of community transmission. Breastfeeding does not need to stop or pause for persons receiving the vaccine. You can take acetaminophen (Tylenol) for post-vaccine fever, headache or muscle aches.

I am immunosuppressed – do you recommend that I receive the COVID vaccine?

Persons with HIV infection or other immunocompromising conditions, or who take immunosuppressive medications or therapies, might be at increased risk for severe COVID-19. mRNA COVID-19 vaccines may be given to persons with immunocompromise but there is limited information about the safety profile and effectiveness in these patients. There is the potential that you may have a reduced immune response to the COVID-19.

Even after receiving the vaccine, it is still recommended you practice social distancing, wear a mask and wash hands frequently to reduce the spread of Coronavirus. The CDC and local health departments will give guidance when these measures are no longer needed. You can find additional information about the Covid19 virus and the available vaccines at [CDC.gov/Coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/Coronavirus).

Sincerely,

Rev. Beverly Waddell-Jiggetts, MD, MDiv