



DISCUSSING COVID-19 VACCINATION WITH YOUR PATIENTS

With the introduction of vaccines for COVID-19, many patients are eager to become vaccinated and return to a more recognizable, pre-pandemic version of life – visiting family and friends in person, returning to the office and the classroom, and venturing into stores and restaurants.

However, other patients are feeling hesitant due to vaccination myths and misinformation. Here is a brief list of common concerns to address when speaking with those who are vaccine hesitant.^{57, 58, 59}

Myth: The COVID-19 vaccines are not safe and have not been adequately tested.

According to the FDA, the COVID-19 vaccines are effective and safe. “The vaccines have undergone the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history, and vaccine developers followed all the necessary steps during clinical trials.” The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines were developed with messenger RNA (mRNA) technology which allowed for faster vaccine development and has been in use for years.

Myth: The vaccines were developed too quickly, and shortcuts were taken.

Neither science nor safety shortcuts were taken to develop the vaccines. They are a result of existing research, increased priority, unprecedented collaboration, and generous funding. The human clinical trials were also larger than usual for human trials, enrolling up to 45,000 participants, as opposed to a typical trial with less than 3,000 participants. All of these efforts contributed to the expedited development of safe and effective vaccines.

Myth: The vaccine will give me COVID-19.

None of the vaccines contain a live strain of the virus. Therefore, the vaccine will not give you COVID-19. The mRNA vaccine contains a “blueprint” of a small, non-living piece of the virus. Your body will use this blueprint to build antibodies to the actual virus should you ever become exposed to it.

You may experience side effects from the vaccine that will make you feel sick, but these symptoms are the result of your body working to strengthen your immune system. Should you become infected, your body will now know how to respond to the actual virus and fight it more effectively. Common side effects felt after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine are soreness at the injection site, fatigue, headache, body aches, or mild fever. But these side effects only last one to three days, if experienced at all.

Myth: The vaccine will alter my DNA.

Your DNA will not be altered. The vaccine’s mRNA does not and cannot interact with your DNA because DNA is stored within your cells, and the vaccine does not enter your cells.

Myth: The vaccine will make me sterile or infertile.

There is no evidence that the COVID-19 vaccines could result in sterility or infertility. However, COVID-19 illness may pose a serious risk to an ongoing pregnancy and the mother’s health. Pregnant patients should discuss getting the vaccine and any concerns they have with their physician.

Myth: The vaccines will not protect me against new variants of the coronavirus.

Data has found that the vaccines appear to be effective against several new strains of SARS-CoV-2. COVID-19 has less of a chance of spreading and being a health hazard when more people are vaccinated.

Myth: I’ve already had COVID-19, so I don’t need the vaccine.

It is possible to become re-infected with COVID-19. Getting vaccinated will help minimize symptoms in the event you become re-infected.

It is also important to remind your patients that even though they have been vaccinated, they still need to follow current COVID-19 safety precautions.