

Common COVID-19 Vaccine Concerns and Misconceptions



As COVID continues to affect Missourians, your patients, friends, and coworkers may come to you with questions about the vaccine. This guide addresses some of the most common concerns or misconceptions you may encounter.

Reassure patients that it's okay to have questions or concerns. The stress of the pandemic is immense and misinformation about the vaccine is rampant, so feeling fearful or angry is natural. Having an open and honest conversation with a trusted physician or pharmacist may help alleviate your patients' anxiety about receiving the COVID vaccine.

CONCERN

The vaccine will give me COVID.

FACT

The vaccine trains your immune system to recognize and defend your body from COVID, but it will not actually cause a COVID infection. The vaccine does not contain live COVID virus.

MISCONCEPTION

I don't need the vaccine because I've already had COVID.

FACT

Getting infected with COVID does provide some natural immunity after your infection has run its course. However, this natural immunity decreases over time. Early studies indicate that the immunity provided by the COVID vaccine is longer-lasting than the immunity acquired through infection.

CONCERN

The vaccine will affect my fertility.

FACT

The COVID vaccine will not affect fertility. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists has stated that the COVID vaccine is safe for people who are thinking about becoming pregnant, wanting to become pregnant, are pregnant, or who are breastfeeding.



MISCONCEPTION

99% of people who test positive for COVID survive, and I'm healthy. I don't need the vaccine.

FACT

While it's true that the majority of people who test positive for COVID survive, that's not the whole story. Even among previously healthy patients, long-term side effects in COVID survivors can include chronic fatigue, mild to severe lung problems, joint pain, chronic headaches, cognitive issues, depression, anxiety, loss of smell or taste, and others.

If you're not worried about complications for yourself, consider your family, friends, and coworkers. You don't know what underlying health conditions the people around you might have, and getting the vaccine will help you protect the people who are closest to you.

CONCERN

The vaccine will cause unknown long-term complications.

FACT

According to the CDC, vaccine monitoring has historically shown that side effects generally happen within six weeks of receiving a vaccine dose. For this reason, the FDA required each of the authorized COVID vaccines to be studied for at least eight weeks after the final dose. Millions of people have received COVID vaccines, and no long-term side effects have been detected.

MISCONCEPTION

The vaccine has caused severe side effects and death in a large number of people who received it.

FACT

All vaccines and medicines do carry a small risk of adverse reactions. However, millions of people in the United States have safely received the COVID vaccine under some of the most intense safety monitoring in U.S. history.

The CDC and the FDA are currently monitoring reports that the Johnson & Johnson vaccine may have an increased risk of developing thrombocytopenia syndrome or Guillain-Barre Syndrome. It's important to understand that these reported side effects are still incredibly rare.

It's also important to note that reports of adverse events to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) following vaccination, including deaths, do not necessarily mean that a vaccine caused a health problem. It simply means that a patient experienced an adverse health event within a certain timeframe after receiving a vaccine. Correlation does not always equal causation.



MISCONCEPTION

Certain blood types/skin colors are less susceptible to COVID, so I don't need to get the vaccine.

FACT

No blood type, skin color, or other physical characteristic has been found to decrease the risk of getting infected with or having complications from COVID.

CONCERN

The vaccine won't protect me against COVID variants.

FACT

The vaccine is effective against COVID variants. A June 2021 study from the U.K. found that the Pfizer vaccine is 96% effective against hospitalization from the delta variant after two doses. This is encouraging news!

MISCONCEPTION

The vaccine doesn't work anyway. People are still getting infected.

FACT

The vaccine works. Many people are still getting infected in Missouri because around half of Missourians still have not received the COVID vaccine. In July 2021, around 97% of people hospitalized in the United States due to COVID symptoms were unvaccinated.

While unlikely, people who have been vaccinated can still get COVID. However, people who are vaccinated but become infected with COVID are much less likely to experience severe symptoms or require hospitalization.

CONCERN

The vaccine is made of aborted fetal tissue.

FACT

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines were developed without the use of fetal tissue and do not contain fetal tissue. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine did use fetal cell lines (cells grown in a lab, not aborted fetal tissue) in the production of its vaccine. This is a complex ethical issue. In short, if you're concerned about fetal tissue being used in the production of vaccines and have the option to choose, opt to receive the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines.



CONCERN

The vaccine will alter my DNA.

FACT

The mRNA in the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines never enters the nucleus of the cell where your DNA is located. The mRNA causes your cells to make protein to stimulate the immune system, and then the mRNA quickly breaks down — without interacting with your DNA at all.

MISCONCEPTION

We can't trust the vaccine because its development was rushed and it hasn't been approved by the FDA.

FACT

Researchers have been studying and working with mRNA vaccines for decades. The companies who created the current COVID vaccines put their vaccines through rigorous clinical trials involving tens of thousands of volunteers.

The FDA requires the companies to follow up with volunteers for up to two years after getting the vaccine to make sure the vaccines are safe and effective. Because of how prevalent COVID is, it only took a few months for the clinical trials to collect enough data to make an initial evaluation. The FDA, as well as an independent panel of vaccine experts, closely scrutinized the data from those trials and deemed the current vaccines in the U.S. safe and effective for emergency use. Similar independent panels in several other countries are in agreement.

MISCONCEPTION

The pandemic will be over soon anyway, so I don't need to get the vaccine.

FACT

The unfortunate fact is this: things will not be "normal" again until we achieve herd immunity against COVID. As another enormous wave of COVID cases sweeps across Missouri in the summer of 2021, nearly a year after the first wave of COVID cases first devastated the state, it is clear that the virus is still very much a threat. Many more people around Missouri must get vaccinated in order to decrease the transmission rate of COVID and get us back to our normal lives.