Frequently Asked Questions about the COVID-19 Vaccine

April 7, 2021

Q: Is the vaccine mandatory for healthcare workers?

A: The COVID-19 vaccine is not mandatory for healthcare workers, but it is highly recommended.

Q: How was the vaccine created so quickly?

A: Usually, vaccines are developed in phases that occur one after another. The COVID-19 vaccines were developed quickly by doing those phases simultaneously. Researchers from around the world cooperated and shared data to meet the FDA's rigorous safety and efficacy requirements. Scientists were able to manufacture vaccine doses at the same time as the vaccine research trials were conducted. This way, there was no lag time between FDA authorization and vaccine delivery. No short cuts were taken in making safe and effective vaccines.

Q: What vaccines are being administered at ECMC?

A: **Pfizer-BioNTech** COVID-19 vaccine is administered as a 2-dose series, 3 weeks apart, into the muscle for individuals 16 years of age and older.

Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine is administered as a 2-dose series, 1 month apart, into the muscle for individuals 18 years of age and older.

Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 vaccine is administered as a single dose, into the muscle for individuals 18 years of age and older.

Q: How do the COVID-19 Vaccines Work?

A: COVID-19 vaccines give instructions for our own cells to make a harmless "spike protein." The spike protein is found on the surface of the virus that causes COVID-19. After the protein piece is made, the cell breaks down the instructions (mRNA) and gets rid of it. Next, the cell displays the protein piece on its surface. Our immune system recognizes that the protein doesn't belong there and begins building an immune response resulting in antibody formation. This is the process for how our body learns how to protect against future infection. Those vaccinated gain protection from the virus without ever having to risk experiencing serious consequences of getting sick with COVID-19.

Q: How is this different from conventional vaccines?

A: Conventional vaccines put a pre-determined part of a virus, a weakened virus, or an inactivated virus into our bodies in order to trigger an immune response. This allows the body to create antibodies against the virus so that the body is more readily able to identify and eliminate the target virus.

Q: What is the benefit of the COVID-19 vaccine?

A: In ongoing clinical trials, all three vaccines have been shown to prevent COVID-19.

Q: What are the most common side effects from the three vaccines?

A: The most common side effects are the same as other vaccines and include fever, chills, fatigue, headache, myalgia, and pain at the injection site. These side effects are most common after the second dose and may occur in up to 50% of those receiving the vaccine, however, they are a good indicator of an immune response and often resolve rapidly.

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Q. What should I do about side effects?
If you experience a severe allergic reaction, call 9-1-1, or go to the nearest hospital. Call the vaccination provider or your healthcare provider if you have any side effects that bother you or do not go away.

Q: Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccine?
A: No, you cannot contract COVID-19 from the vaccine.

Q: What if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?
A: If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, discuss your options with your healthcare provider.

Q: Can the vaccine change my DNA?
A: No, the vaccine is never incorporated into the nucleus of the cell. It only gives directions to produce the antigen outside of the cell nucleus and then it is destroyed.

Q: After getting vaccinated, do I still have to mask and follow other COVID-19 prevention safety precautions?
A: Please continue to protect yourself and others even after getting fully vaccinated. Maintain a 6-feet distance away from others. Wear a mask over your mouth and nose when near others outside your home. Stay home when you are sick. Avoid crowded places. Wash your hands often.

Q: Where can I find more information about the vaccine?
A: • Ask the vaccination provider.

• Visit CDC at **https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html**

• Visit FDA at **https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/counterterrorism-and-emerging-threats/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19**

• NYS: **https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home**

• WNY Vaccine Hub: **https://www.vaxwny.org/**

• Erie County: **https://www2.erie.gov/health/index.php?q=coronavirus**