



Marin County Health and Human Services COVID-19 Vaccine Conversation Guide

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Safety Concerns

I worry vaccines were developed too quickly

There are three ways vaccine development can be safely sped up – 1) we use what we know, 2) we increase staff and resources, 3) we limit what we study.

Here are the details:

1. **We use what we already know**

We have more than 100 years of vaccine development, so we already have a foundation of knowledge that allows us to speed up research. It's like starting on third base rather than first.

2. **We increase staff and resources**

In emergencies, the amount of funding and number of people working on a vaccine can be significantly increased so we can get answers faster.

3. **We limit what we study**

In normal vaccine clinical trials we study all sorts of things, but in an emergency, we limit what we study to **if it is safe** and **if it works**. People think that safety and side effects take a lot of time to learn, but with our 100 years of research we know that:

- 99% of all **short-term side effects** are identified in 2-3 weeks
- ~90% of all **long-term side effects** are identified within 45 days



I worry vaccines were approved too quickly

In emergencies, the FDA has a “rapid” approval process to make sure lifesaving vaccines can be evaluated as quickly as possible. This is called an Emergency Use Authorization (or EUA).

Here are important facts about the EUA:

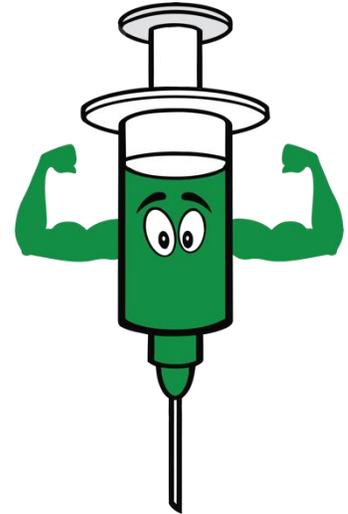
- The safety requirements are the same in a regular approval and an EUA.
 - Vaccines **MUST** be found safe
 - Vaccine benefits **MUST** outweigh any risk
- The process is sped up by putting the vaccine at the front of the line and increasing the number of people evaluating it.
- An EUA is temporary, lasting only as long as the emergency lasts – once the emergency is over, the vaccine must get regular FDA approval.
- EUA vaccines are not experimental.
 - All vaccines given an EUA have already gone through all the standard safety testing as part of the clinical trials.
 - EUA vaccines still must go through all the research steps before being evaluated.
 - An EUA is simply a faster approval process, not a faster research process

I think vaccines have dangerous ingredients

Vaccines are very safe and effective. All vaccines have been rigorously studied and found to be safe.

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines contain:

- Messenger RNA (not the virus) which are a set of instructions for cells to temporarily create protein spikes the same as the coronavirus
- Lipid bubble which are just fat bubbles that encase the messenger RNA to protect it
- Saline Solution
- Small amounts of salts, sugars, and acids



The Janssen (J&J) vaccine contains:

- A harmless, killed virus (similar to the virus that causes the common cold) with a harmless piece of the coronavirus attached to it
- Saline Solution
- Small amounts of salts, sugars, and acids

We don't know the long-term side effects of these vaccines

We have more than 100 years' experience studying vaccines, so we know that most short- and long-term side effects are known in about 2 months after vaccination.

This history tells us that:

1. Severe side effects are **extremely** rare
2. Long term side effects usually happen within 45 days of vaccination

While the COVID vaccines are new, the technology they use is not. mRNA technology (used in the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines) has been studied for more than 30 years and is used in HIV treatments. Viral vector technology (used in the J&J vaccine) has been around since the 1970s and was used in the Ebola vaccine that ended the 2014-15 West African Ebola Outbreak.

I'm waiting at least a year to see what happens before I'll consider the vaccine

The vaccines have been thoroughly studied and found to be safe. 99% of all short-term side effects are identified within 2-3 weeks. ~90% of all long-term side effects are identified within 45 days.

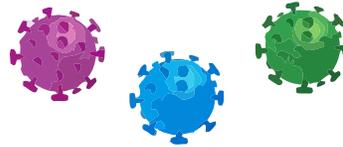
Waiting has its own risks: as of May 2021, 1,773 of every million American have died of COVID compared with 1 serious adverse event for every million doses of the vaccine.

I worry the vaccines are unsafe for children so I will not vaccinate my child

The vaccines have been thoroughly studied with more than 2,200 children. Clinical trials with children show that the safety is the same as is for adults. There have been NO serious safety concerns in children.

As of May 2021:

- 3.5 million people younger than age 18 have been vaccinated
- By May 20, 2021, at least 600,000 children, ages 12 to 15, have received their first dose



Religious Concerns

I don't think the vaccine is halal

The Pfizer, Moderna, and J&J vaccines do not contain any pork or gelatin. The vaccines are halal and allowed under Islamic law.

I don't think the vaccine is kosher

The Pfizer, Moderna, and J&J vaccines do not contain any pork or gelatin. The vaccines are kosher and allowed under Jewish law.

I won't take the vaccine because it contains aborted fetal cells

Neither the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine contain *any* animal or human cells. That includes aborted fetal cells.

The J&J vaccine is **cultured** in cells derived from cells that came from aborted tissue in the 1960's but does not contain any of those cells in the vaccine itself. **BUT** the Catholic Church has said "getting vaccines that do not pose an ethical dilemma is not always possible," so the J&J vaccine is allowed.

If you consider this an ethical dilemma, ask for the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines.

Vaccine Specific Concerns and Information

I'm scared to get the J&J vaccine because of the risk of blood clots, but I don't want to two shots

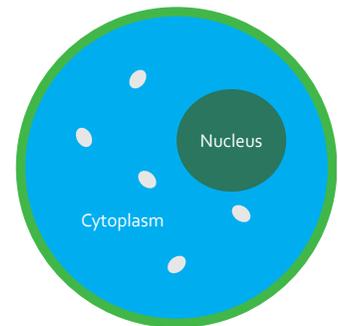
The risk of a rare type of blood clot after getting the J&J vaccine is *extremely small* (0.0000088%). Only 6 people out of 6.8 million people got this blood clot after getting the vaccine.

You are 25 TIMES more likely to be hit by a plane while in your own home (1 in 250,000) than develop blood clot from the vaccine. But if you get severe COVID-19, you have a 31% risk of developing a blood clot. The risk is the disease, not the vaccine.

I worry an mRNA vaccine will mess with my DNA

The mRNA vaccines work on the cytoplasm of the cell, not in the nucleus where DNA is stored.

Because the vaccines don't come in contact with your DNA, it is impossible for the vaccine to affect your DNA.



The side effects sound terrible

Like with any medication or vaccine, there is the possibility of side effects. Side effects with vaccines are a sign that your body is working with the vaccine to create an immune response. So, while you might feel "punky" after the vaccine, it's actually a good thing.

The side effects are temporary and usually will go away on their own without treatment in a day or two. Any temporary discomfort is better than getting COVID which can have very serious consequences including heart and lung damage, brain disease, and death.

I don't have time to do two shots. Can I just get on a J&J list?

There is not a list but you can call vaccination sites and ask if they are offering J&J vaccine or visit the Marin County Vaccine Finder at <https://coronavirus.marinhhs.org/vaccinefinder>.

I'm confused about age requirements. What ages are eligible for the vaccine?

- **People 12 and older can get the Pfizer vaccine**
- **People 18 and older can get the Moderna or the J&J vaccine**

As Moderna and J&J vaccine clinical trials with children 12 -18 finish up and are evaluated by the FDA, they may be approved for younger people. There are also vaccine clinical trials underway with children younger than 12. When those clinical trials finish and the FDA has evaluated the data, children younger than 12 may be eligible to be vaccinated as well.

COVID-19 disease vs the vaccine

I had COVID, I don't need the shot

We do not know how long the immunity from getting COVID-19 lasts, or how well that immunity works over time. There have been instances of someone getting COVID-19 more than once. That's why it is important to get vaccinated even if you had COVID-19.

The CDC recommends people who have had COVID-19 get vaccinated as soon as they are out of quarantine. The exception to this is if someone was treated with monoclonal antibodies, then they should wait 45 days after treatment to get the vaccine.

If I get COVID, it won't be that bad. I am sure I can fight it.

We have no way of knowing who will have serious COVID-19 vs mild COVID-19. As of Mar 2021, 1 of every 564 Americans has died of COVID-19.

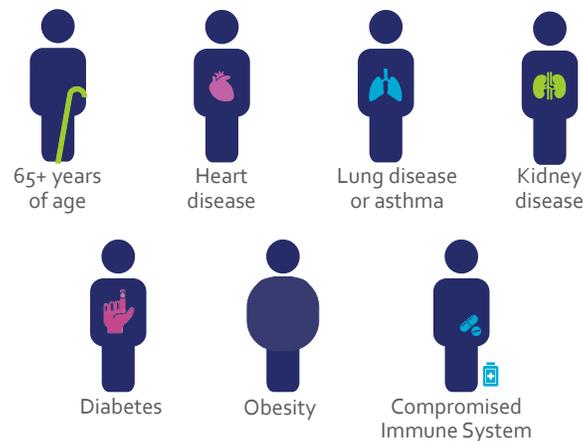
Even if you survive, there are serious consequences of the disease, even for those with mild cases. Scientist recently found that about 1 in 3 people with COVID will suffer brain disease ranging from depression to brain fog.

I have other health issues so I don't think I should get the shot

Getting the vaccine is *especially* important for people with other health issues because if they get COVID-19 they are at higher risk of serious illness or death.

This includes people with:

- Heart disease
- Lung disease or asthma
- Kidney disease
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Compromised Immune System (including those with weakened immune systems from cancer or HIV)



Rumors and Misinformation

I heard the vaccines can affect fertility or cause miscarriages

This rumor started because the placenta has spikes, and someone thought the vaccine would attack the placenta. But COVID-19 spikes and placenta spikes have different genetic codes, so the vaccines don't affect the placenta.

Think about protein spikes as a lock and vaccines as keys. There are lots of locks but only the key meant for that lock will work on it.

I hear people who are breastfeeding should not get the vaccine

Actually, the opposite is true. When a person gets vaccinated while breastfeeding, their immune system develops antibodies that protect against COVID-19. These antibodies can be passed through breast milk to the baby.

Newborns of vaccinated mothers who breastfeed can benefit from these antibodies against COVID-19.



A friend who works in a hospital told me that because I had Covid I should be concerned about viral load

In fact, the opposite is true. There is a growing body of evidence that shows fully vaccinated people are LESS likely to have asymptomatic infection and are less likely to transmit the virus to others.

But it's important to remember the risk of infection among vaccinated people cannot be totally eliminated as long as we have community transmission of the coronavirus. That's why it's important for all of us to get vaccinated.

I don't want to register on MyTurn due to documentation/immigration status because I fear ICE

Everyone has a right to the vaccine regardless of their immigration status. MyTurn will not share any information.

However, if you are concerned, you can use MyTurn to find vaccination sites that do not require an appointment.

I heard that the vaccines are imbedding microchips in us to track our movement.

No vaccines contain microchips. There is not the technology for this – the vaccine needles are too small to have even the smallest microchip pass through them.

This rumor got started because there was an idea of using microchips on the outside of the vaccine vials to track their shipping and ensure they were kept at the proper temperature. But no vaccine scientist, expert, or manufacturer has discussed microchips in the shots. The only people discussing this rumor, are the people who started it.



Conversation Guidelines

- Be respectful
- Be empathetic
- Ask permission before giving information
- Reinforce that it is okay to have questions
- Do not box a vaccine refuser into a corner so they can't change their mind without losing face
- Talk about your personal experience
- Talk about personal good reasons for vaccination (for example, hugging family and friends)
- LISTEN

Your job is NOT to convince someone to vaccinate – that is rarely successful and often feels like coercion to the person. Instead:

- **ASK** questions to help a person self-reflect
- **INFORM** by providing easy to understand information
- **SUPPORT** a person's right and ability to make their own choices

Addressing Conspiracy Theories

Keep in mind, **all** of us are susceptible to conspiracy theories. In a recent study, almost 90% of Americans have wondered if there was “something to” the conspiracy theory that Area 51 studies aliens and their spacecraft. So, the takeaway is that:

1. It's human to believe a conspiracy theory
2. None of us are above them

The reason conspiracy theories can be so compelling is that they usually contain a verifiable kernel of truth, and they incorporate the very compelling “danger” concept. You'll often hear things like:

- What **they** don't want you to know (they usually refers to the government)
- Threads of injustice and inequity (a common conspiracy is that Big Pharma is making a fortune off of vaccines that are dangerous)

There are a couple of characteristics of people who are avid conspiracy theorists:

- They believe more than one
- The conspiracy theories are central to their world view
- Conspiracy theories are a response to their feelings that the world is unjust
- They see those who try to debunk conspiracy theories as proof of the theory itself

COVID-19 Vaccine Conversation Guide

So that makes addressing conspiracy theories a really tough nut to crack but here are some hints to help you:

1. **Be respectful.** It doesn't matter what you think or what the other person says, always be kind, compassionate, polite. Being empathetic encourages a conversation.
2. **Take it offline:** If you see someone posting a conspiracy theory, do not call them out publicly. Reach out via text or direct message, or even better – in person. If you embarrass someone, they will not want to engage in a conversation with you.
3. **Ask the question:** What would it take to change your mind. If the answer is “nothing.” You're done. The person is not open to discussion.
4. **Build trust:** Find an element of the theory that you can both agree on (maybe that kernel of truth it started with). Use a friendly approach so when you talk about the actual misinformation, someone is feeling like you're on their side.
5. **Offer up a “truth sandwich”:** Linguist George Lakoff developed a simple approach. We'll demonstrate with the conspiracy theory that vaccines are used to make poor women infertile:
 - **State what's true**
There have been thousands of women who have become pregnant and had healthy babies after they were vaccinated.
 - **Debunk the conspiracy theory**
The vaccines are not a plot to keep poor people from reproducing.
 - **Restate what's true**
I personally know many women, from all different socioeconomic backgrounds who were vaccinated and then got pregnant.
6. **Be like Socrates!** The Socratic Method is one of the most effective ways to combat conspiracies. It's a conversation that uses asking and answering questions to encourage critical thinking.
 - **Don't give a direct answer but offer a question instead**
“Why do you think people believe the idea that the vaccines are used to keep poor women from having babies?”
 - **Help the person see that there is never one “correct” answer unless and until ALL other solutions have been ruled out.**
“Well lots of poor women have been vaccinated and had babies, so we probably have to look at other reasons why some women are not getting pregnant.”
7. **Have realistic expectations:** Some people are not interested in facts and don't want to change. So, be prepared to stop if it is getting ugly. And remember, chipping away at a conspiracy theory takes time so your efforts are not in vain.
8. **Be gentle with those you love:** It's more important to preserve the relationship than to be right. Our loved ones will always be our loved one, don't jeopardize that relationship.