COVID-19 Vaccine, Delta, and the Community

Personal Decision/Community Decision – How does vaccination affect the community?

Many community members have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, especially elders and older adults. Most school-age children (those under the age of 12) are not yet eligible for vaccination, and many young adults are not sure about whether or not to get the vaccine.

There are many reasons that young adults and others are on the fence about getting vaccinated. Some of those reasons are based on their own experiences, but a lot of them are based on misinformation found on the internet and social media.

While the decision to get vaccinated for COVID-19 is a personal one, that decision also affects the community, especially elders, who are at greater risk for severe COVID-19 than young adults, and young children, who cannot yet be vaccinated.

The FAQ's

What is the Delta Variant of COVID-19?

The Delta Variant of COVID-19 is a far more aggressive (much easier to pass on to others and with many more symptoms) strain of the COVID-19 virus that is currently the main type of the virus found in the community and throughout the nation.

- **Can you get the Delta Variant of COVID-19 even after you've had COVID-19 once?**
  Yes.

- **Can you get the Delta Variant of COVID-19 after you've been fully vaccinated for COVID-19?**
  Yes, it's possible, but the symptoms are almost always far less severe, and it very seldom causes hospitalization. Being vaccinated, even if you get COVID-19, also helps to slow the spread, because the more sick you are, the more easily you can spread the virus.

- **What are the symptoms of the Delta Variant of COVID-19**
  The Delta Variant of COVID-19 has basically the same symptoms as the first strain of COVID-19: fever, dry cough, shortness of breath, temporary loss of taste or smell, flulike respiratory and digestive problems, muscle aches, and fatigue (tiredness). The Delta Variant may also cause skin irritation, dry itchy eyes, and in some cases a rash (similar to allergies). Many times these symptoms are worse than with the initial strain of COVID, unless you are vaccinated.

COVID-19 Vaccination

Three COVID-19 vaccines are currently available in the U.S. (Moderna, Pfizer, and the Johnson & Johnson vaccines). The Pfizer vaccine was officially and fully approved on 8/23/2021, but all of the vaccines have been approved by the FDA through a process (emergency use authorization) that ensures they are both safe and effective. The Moderna vaccine is set to be fully approved very soon. Each of these vaccines has been available for several months now, so we know much more about them than earlier this year. They have all proven to be both very safe and very effective.

- **Are the vaccines effective, and do they have side effects?**
  Yes, all of the vaccines are very effective. All vaccines have side effects. In the case of the COVID-19 vaccines and most other vaccines, those side effects are very mild in comparison to the symptoms of the actual disease (COVID-19). They may include very temporary symptoms similar to COVID-19 (usually a low grade fever, a mild headache, and tiredness). They do not usually include any respiratory symptoms.

- **Does the vaccine prevent you from getting COVID-19?**
  In many cases, yes. The vaccines are between about 70% and 94% effective at preventing you from getting COVID-19, depending on your age, health, and other factors, but the best news is that even if you get COVID-19 after being fully vaccinated, in almost all cases, the symptoms are far more mild, like a cold. Also, people who are fully vaccinated are very seldom hospitalized due to COVID-19, including elders and those with other health conditions.

- **If you're vaccinated, can you give COVID-19 to others?**
  It is possible, but it's less likely. The vaccines provided very strong protection against passing the first strain of COVID-19 on to other people, but because the Delta variant is so much more contagious, it is possible (about ¼ of the time) to pass COVID-19 on to others. Even if you're vaccinated, if you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should be tested, and until you are tested, and your results come back, you should social distance, wear a mask, and avoid unnecessary travel and contact with people with higher risk (elders and unvaccinated individuals).

- **If you're fully vaccinated, do you ever have to go into isolation or quarantine as a result of COVID-19?**
  After you are fully vaccinated, it's much less likely that you will get COVID-19, but if you have symptoms, you should be seen by a health care provider and be tested. You should also quarantine until you are released by a healthcare provider. If you have close contact with a positive patient (meaning 15 minutes or longer and within 6 feet), you should be tested for COVID-19 and should quarantine until released by your healthcare provider.

Third Dose and Boosters

The CDC now recommends that if you are immunocompromised (meaning you are taking medicines or have a health condition that suppresses your immune system), you should receive a third dose of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine (whichever vaccine you previously received). If you feel you should receive a third dose, speak to your healthcare provider. You can receive this third dose wherever the same type of vaccine is provided. No second or third dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is currently recommended.

Booster doses of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are now recommended for all fully vaccinated people beginning 8 months after the second dose of your initial vaccination. These doses should be available beginning in late September.

Check out these Web sites:

- https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/booster-shot.html
- https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/vaccine-benefits.html
- https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/8-things.html
- https://www.hhs.gov/coronavirus/explaining-operation-warp-speed/index.html
- https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases_casesper100klast7days