

The Allergy & Asthma Clinic

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE COVID VACCINE

Many of our patients have relayed a number of concerns regarding the COVID 19 vaccinations which have been approved by the FDA. This year has been difficult, to say the least, but the vaccine offers us a shimmer of hope in getting this pandemic under control and allowing us to resume our “normal” lives. Currently, the CDC has given emergency authorizations for two vaccines, Pfizer and Moderna.

PFIZER VS. MODERNA VACCINATION

The Pfizer vaccination is recommended for patients 16 and older, while the Moderna vaccine is recommended in those 18 years and older. The data from Pfizer has claimed that the vaccine starts to take effect as soon as the first dose and has an efficacy rate of 95% about a week after the second dose. What this means to the general public is that 95% of people who receive this vaccine are protected from becoming sick with COVID-19. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is administered in 2 doses, 21 days apart. The Moderna vaccine claims that their vaccine has an efficacy rate of 94.1% and the patient will require 2 injections as well, 28 days apart. It is important to note that even if one receives either of these vaccinations, it may take weeks for your body to build up immunity. It is therefore important to remain vigilant about helping to prevent the spread the disease by washing your hands frequently, wearing a mask in public and maintaining social distance. According to the Mayo Clinic, if a patient has been exposed to COVID-19 and develops symptoms more than 3 days after getting vaccinated, or the symptoms last for more than 2 days, the patient should self-isolate and get tested. The CDC also recommends that patients who have contracted COVID-19 in the past should still get the vaccine. However, if the patient has an active infection, the patient should wait to get vaccinated until after the illness has completely resolved.

Important Notice: The information contained in this newsletter is gathered from the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, the CDC (Centers for Disease Control), and the Mayo Clinic. It is deemed accurate as of January 2, 2021. However, please understand the new information about the COVID 19 vaccine continues to become available and it is possible that the information contained herein may become outdated in the future.

POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS

Both COVID-19 vaccinations have reported the following side effects, occurring either during the first or second dose:

- Pain, redness or swelling at the injection site
- Fever
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle Pain
- Chills
- Joint Pain

WHAT THE ALLERGIC PATIENT SHOULD KNOW

Allergic reactions to vaccines, in general, are rare with the incidence of anaphylaxis estimated at 1.31 in 1 million doses given. The following recommendations are based on the most up to date information, but as we have experienced over the last few months, information and recommendations by our governing agencies are constantly being updated and evolving. Although severe reactions are rare, we recommend that the COVID vaccinations be administered in a medical setting, where the patient can be monitored for 30 minutes.

Individuals with common allergies to medications, foods, inhalants, insects and latex are no more likely than the general public to have an allergic reaction to the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. Those patients should be informed of the benefits of the vaccine versus its risks.

The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine should not be administered to individuals with a known history of a severe allergic reaction to polyethylene glycol as it is a component of this vaccine known to cause anaphylaxis. Note that an allergy to polyethylene glycol is rare.

IMMUNOCOMPROMISED PATIENTS

Both the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19, mRNA vaccines do not use live viruses and can be administered to immunocompromised patients. Physicians and other providers should inform such immunocompromised patients of the possibility of a diminished immune response to the vaccine.

We hope that this addresses some of your concerns. As always, we are here to help and together, we will get through these very trying times.