



Listening Session with Dr. Donald Williams, M.D.

August 4, 2021

Question list

1. How likely is it that people vaccinated early will need a booster and when might that happen? Information from the CDC at this time is that it is felt too early to know whether a booster will be needed. As many issues with Covid have shown us, it is a continually changing landscape.
2. How effective is the vaccine? There have now been 4 “generations” of Covid: alpha, beta, gamma, and delta. The original vaccine studies were done on the alpha strain and showed 65-95% effectiveness in preventing symptomatic disease. The same is not likely true for the delta variant, although vaccination has still prevented vaccinated individuals who develop Covid illness from needing hospitalization or dying in greater than 95% of vaccine recipients.
3. How safe is the vaccine? All three vaccines currently available United States have been found to be safe. There have been rare complications from the vaccines, including some blood clotting problems in women younger than 50 years. There have been some cases of self-limited heart inflammation in adolescent males that appears to be a self-limiting disorder. These cases I believe have occurred in < 1 in 1,000,000 vaccine recipients.
4. What are my chances of having a severe allergic reaction? Severe allergic reactions to Covid vaccines are rare, I believe Jefferson County, WI has had a single severe reaction in many thousands of doses given. If someone has a severe reaction to a first dose, it is not recommended that they receive a second. For individuals with significant allergies, it is recommended they speak with their physician about the safety of the Covid vaccine before receiving it.
5. What makes the Delta variant so different from regular COVID-19? All viruses have random changes in their structure, for example the influenza virus changes enough that flu shots are needed yearly and the components in the flu vaccine often changes from year to year. The Delta variant of the Covid has randomly mutated to be enough different from the original strain that it is able to escape some of the immunity provided by the Covid vaccine and also is able to infect an individual more easily. Fortunately individuals who are immunized and become ill with the Delta variant strain of Covid tend to be less sick and less likely to be hospitalized or die. Recent

evidence does suggest that individuals who are immunized and contract delta Covid, may shed large numbers of viral particles, and may still infect others. This is the reason that resumption of mask wearing has been recommended by the CDC.

6. Can I safely receive the COVID-19 vaccine if I've had allergic reactions to other vaccines? Probably yes, but you should check with your physician first. After receiving the vaccine, you will be asked to remain on site for 15 minutes risk of severe allergic reactions.
7. Is it possible to get COVID-19 from the vaccine? Absolutely impossible, none of the vaccines contain the Covid virus. The Moderna and Pfizer vaccines have our bodies create the front "bumper" of the virus, which stimulates our body to recognize it as abnormal, and produce immunity against it. The Johnson and Johnson vaccine works similarly to recognize the virus and destroy it before it infects us.
8. Does it make a difference which vaccine is available to me? Official recommendations are that all vaccines are considered effective and safe and no preference is given to one over the other. If you receive a first dose of Moderna or Pfizer vaccine, you should receive a second dose of the same manufactured vaccine.
9. Should I get my children vaccinated? Currently the vaccine is only available to 12 and up, and I would strongly recommend vaccination. In the news just today, was a description of large number of pediatric admissions in Florida. For the sake of my grandchildren ages 4–10, I hope the vaccine will be available for them soon.
10. What are common vaccine side effects? **Common side effects from vaccination are pain, redness, and swelling on the arm where the shot was given, and tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, fever and nausea throughout the rest of the body. Many people have no side effects.**
11. What can I do to minimize vaccine after-effects? Probably not a lot, it is recommended that people drink lots of fluids after the vaccine. If side effects occur it is reasonable to take Tylenol or ibuprofen to lessen the symptoms. Symptoms can be severe enough that occasionally people will need to miss work, but virtually all disappear within about three days.
12. Could I still spread the coronavirus to others even if I've had the vaccine? Yes, unfortunately with the Delta variant, people who have received the vaccine but become mildly or asymptomatic infected will still shed Covid vaccine particles. It is not possible to develop or pass on a Covid infection from the vaccine itself however.
13. Should I wear a mask if I have been vaccinated? Masks work in two ways: to prevent you from spreading the infection to others if you are sick, and to prevent you from catching the virus from others around you who may be ill. They actually work best to reduce the spread from you to others. Current CDC guidelines have recommended vaccine recipients wear masks around others indoors.

14. Is it safe to get the vaccine while pregnant or breastfeeding/nursing? Yes both have been studied and it is safe and recommended to receive a vaccine when pregnant or breast-feeding.
15. If I have already had COVID-19 should I still get vaccinated? Yes, the current recommendation is to get a vaccine 90 days after the illness, as there is no good data on the duration of immunity from the illness beyond 90 days after the illness. The vaccine protection is slightly different from natural immunity and felt to likely last longer. I have personally seen individuals with repeat Covid infections.
16. What side effects should we anticipate with the COVID-19 vaccine? See Question 10 above, many have nothing but a sore arm. Side effects are more common after the second dose of Moderna and Pfizer vaccines.
17. I have heard that the vaccine is not yet approved, why is that? The approval process for any new medication or vaccine is extremely complicated and involves a great deal of testing and paperwork. That process takes a long time and has not been "short cut" in the FDA approval process. There has been more testing of the Covid vaccine, than any prior vaccine. Also because of the emergency use authorization, there have been hundreds of millions of individuals who have received the vaccine worldwide, with very few serious complications. The risk of a serious complication from Covid infection is much much greater than a complication from the vaccine. With all the vaccines we administer, I tell patients you are "trading a large risk of disability from the disease for a minimal risk of disability from the vaccine".

Thank you for your interest in Covid vaccines, and for your support of the A-Team and Opportunities. I have reviewed each of these questions on the cdc.gov Covid website, although the information above is also in part my professional opinion.

Donald L. Williams, MD