HELPING PATIENTS UNDERSTAND: COVID-19 VACCINES

Your patients and their families trust you to provide coordinated, specialized CF care. This includes listening to their concerns and answering their questions about COVID-19 vaccines. The following can help you build your patients’ confidence in protecting their health and is based on KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor: March 2021 | KFF (accessed 4/01/2021).

SAFETY & SIDE EFFECTS

If they are worried about safety and side effects, you can let them know it is normal to have questions:

- These vaccines are new and there are things that we are still learning. But what we do know is that millions of Americans have already been vaccinated – in addition to millions more around the world.
- What we’re learning is that although side effects from the different vaccines may vary, those commonly reported include pain where the shot is injected, fatigue, muscle aches, chills, and fever. These side effects usually go away within a few days and are a sign that your immune system is working.
- In response to a limited number of cases of a rare and severe type of blood clot in individuals after receiving the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommended pausing its use and performed an investigation. After further analysis they recommended resuming vaccinations. Please see the CDC’s statement.
- We also know that these vaccines are very effective at keeping you out of the hospital and from dying from COVID-19.
- Recent studies show that the vaccines are also very effective at keeping you from getting COVID-19 in the first place, which for some people can cause long-term symptoms, serious illness that requires hospitalization, and even death.
- Recent research showed that both the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines provide protection for at least 6 months after the second dose.

APPROVED TOO QUICKLY

If they think corners were cut in developing and approving the vaccines, you can reassure them:

- Faced with a global threat, the scientific and medical community came together with a single focus to develop safe and effective vaccines. Even though the vaccines are new, the science and technology behind them have been in development for 20 years.
- Pharmaceutical companies were motivated to begin producing vaccines while still conducting clinical trials, so that the vaccines would be ready for distribution as soon as they were authorized.
- With the support of many countries, the usual red tape was removed so that these vaccines could be authorized and made available to stop the spread of the virus and protect as many people as possible.
HOW TO GET VACCINATED

If they are unsure where or when to get vaccinated, you can help them find out:

- Encourage them to contact their state health department to find vaccination locations near them.
- Check local pharmacies to see if vaccine appointments are available. To find pharmacies participating in the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program, direct them to the CDC’s Federal Retail Pharmacy Program website.
- The cost of the vaccine itself is covered by the U.S. government so most can get a vaccine at no cost, including those who do not have health insurance. However, a health care provider may charge for giving the shots. If they want to know if getting a vaccine is covered by their health insurance or about cost-sharing, they can call Compass at 844-COMPASS (844-266-7277).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- For CF-specific COVID-19-related resources, including additional questions and answers about vaccines and how to reduce risk in daily life, visit https://on.cff.org/COVID-19
- To hear Black doctors, nurses, and researchers dispel misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines, visit https://www.greaterthancovid.org/theconversation/
- For information in Spanish from CDC web site about COVID-19 vaccines, visit https://espanol.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/keythingstoknow.html