



MISINFORMATION CHEAT SHEET

COVID-19 VACCINES

Misinformation is a widespread threat to vaccination. There are many misleading and frightening ideas being spread over social media and by word of mouth. One study found that a third of Americans surveyed believed in one or more conspiracies about Covid-19. Those who do are nearly four times less interested in getting vaccinated.

Here are some basic responses to help correct common misconceptions about Covid-19 vaccines. Remember that it is ok not to be an expert. You can always refer people to reputable sources after expressing your beliefs or sharing the facts in the examples below. The most important thing is to have a dialogue. Just do your best to provide resources while allowing people to feel heard.

Wearing a face mask will harm me

There is no evidence that face masks present any health risks. While wearing a mask may feel uncomfortable at first, it will not impair normal breathing. This is true even for those with asthma. Children under the age of two, or those with medical conditions, may not be able to wear masks. You should talk to your doctor about any concerns you have. As long as you don't get your mask wet or wear it while doing heavy exercise, it will not impair your breathing or present any danger to you.

The vaccine will cause me physical harm

None of the vaccines contain live viruses so they cannot give you Covid-19. The most common side effects are short-term, flu-like symptoms. Allergic reactions almost always happen within 30 minutes and can be safely treated. More serious side effects are rare. Out of 1 million doses of the J&J vaccine given to women under the age of 50, only seven cases of blood clots were reported. For every 1 million doses, hundreds of hospitalizations and tens of deaths due to Covid-19 can be prevented. After careful review, CDC and FDA resumed the J&J vaccine use. It is important to be aware of the risk, however rare. Consult your doctor or clinic if you have any questions.

COVID-19 or its vaccines are a conspiracy

There is no evidence of conspiracies around the virus or its vaccines. There are a lot of these kinds of stories going around. I understand that it can be reassuring for some people to imagine that there's someone in control of everything. Unfortunately, this is simply a once-in-a-lifetime natural disaster. We can keep each other safe if we work together to stop the spread.



The vaccine will interfere with my fertility

There is no evidence that any vaccines, including Covid-19 vaccines, impact fertility. Experts currently believe that they should be safe for pregnant and breastfeeding women. Studies are still underway to confirm this. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding and concerned, you should talk with your doctor. If you are trying or planning to get pregnant, there is no reason to avoid getting vaccinated.

The impact/severity of Covid-19 has been exaggerated

The impact of Covid-19 can be hard to grasp. Most cases of Covid-19 have few or no symptoms. This means that there isn't much to see outside of hospital emergency rooms. It can be hard to believe things are so serious if we're not a healthcare worker ourselves. It's also hard to get reliable answers to questions like 'how many people has Covid-19 killed?'. This is because those at the highest risk often have other health factors at play. Covid-19 can also cause death from complications like pneumonia or secondary infections. One way to estimate the overall impact is to look at excess deaths. The number of deaths in the U.S. is usually fairly stable, changing around 1-2% year to year. In 2020, there was a 22.9% increase in deaths. Measuring the impacts of Covid-19 is a hard problem that may take scientists decades. But the big picture is clear. Covid-19 has had a devastating impact on Americans.

Face masks are ineffective at preventing Covid-19 transmission

Face masks are one of our most powerful tools against the spread of Covid-19. In one study, two stylists at a Missouri hair salon saw clients while infected with Covid-19. Everyone was wearing a mask, and none of their 139 clients and secondary contacts got sick. Covid-19 can be spread by people showing no symptoms, so it's critical that everyone wears masks. More than three out of four American adults have agreed to wear face masks when outside of their homes. By joining them, we can be part of an effective strategy to protect our loved ones from the virus.

The vaccine will interact with my DNA

The materials provided by the vaccines do not interact with your DNA at all. Vaccines contain instructions that build up protection without involving your DNA. This is true for the Johnson & Johnson / Janssen vaccine (which uses a disabled, harmless non-covid virus messenger) and the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines (which use mRNA). When the instructions are in the form of mRNA, the mRNA is immediately broken down after use.

Doing _____ will prevent COVID-19

The best way to prevent Covid-19 is to wear masks, social distance and wash your hands. It would be great if there were easy ways to guarantee safety beyond that – I also wish there were easy solutions to this. Many things have been tried, but getting vaccinated is the only 'trick' that actually works!