



COVID-19 VACCINE. ACT NOW!

— By Narendra Singh, MD —

The COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic is now entering its second year with no signs of abating. Our death tolls are rising and many business restrictions are returning. Hospitals are overwhelmed delaying access to treatment for all medical conditions. Multiple new mutations have emerged around the world that appear to spread more easily but fortunately to date are not more lethal.

The strategies to prevent the spread of the virus have not changed. Wearing a facemask in public, social distancing at least 6-feet apart, maintaining good hand hygiene and avoiding crowded poorly ventilated areas are key, personal and public health measures. Sadly, we still have a way to go in improving compliance with these measures.

For persons with medical conditions including heart disease the effects of the virus can be more severe. Elderly individuals and those who are immunocompromised are at increased risk. Maintaining your health with a diet rich in fresh fruits and vegetables is important. Daily exercise, even if it is only in the confines of your own home, helps maintain strength.

The one new tool we have for combating the pandemic is vaccines. The collective efforts of government and industry have led to the development of multiple vaccines against the coronavirus worldwide in record time. Here in the United States, we have three approved vaccines – Ntech, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson. All three vaccines were tested in well-conducted clinical trials and showed more than 90% efficacy.

Although the vaccine rollout strategy has been slower than hoped for the process is improving and accelerating. As a healthcare

worker, I was fortunate to get the Pfizer vaccine early. I had the usual common side effects of mild injection site tenderness with the first shot and a little more tenderness with the booster shot along with a low grade fever and generalized muscle aching. All my side effects were gone in 48 hours. With millions of individuals already being vaccinated the short term safety of the injections has been confirmed. When you get your injections, a 15 minute on site observation period is recommended. Only individuals with a history of severe allergic reactions are being advised not to take the vaccine.

For all others, I would strongly urge you get vaccinated as soon as you are given access. Sadly, there has been much misinformation about the vaccine. We all need to make an informed decision, but I would recommend resources such as the CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus>. Many have raised concerns regarding long term safety which is valid but can only be answered with time. The vaccines are free of eggs, preservatives, and latex. The mRNA technology means that the vaccine has no actual virus in it. If you already have had a COVID 19 infection and developed natural immunity the vaccine is still recommended to bolster the strength of the immune response. At the present time we have limited knowledge of

how long the immunity will last. I suspect that with the multiple mutations we may be needing a shot annually similar to the flu vaccine. The good news is that the vaccines are free to you and many more vaccination centers will open up shortly.

We yearn for life to return to “normal” but that means a global collective response that starts locally. So please, act now. Get vaccinated to protect yourself and those around you. We will all reap the benefits of a better 2021!

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