

**WorkCare Briefing: Trending Beyond COVID-19**  
**Questions & Answers**  
**April 7, 2021**

*The following questions were asked during WorkCare's monthly webinar series on Trending Beyond COVID-19, the sequel to our previous weekly series on Preventing and Managing COVID-19 in the Workplace. Anthony Harris, M.D., M.B.A., M.P.H., WorkCare's Chief Innovation Officer and Associate Medical Director, presented the webinar and provided these answers. Please refer to previous Q&As if your question is not answered here.*

Here are links for your reference:

- [April 7 Webinar Recording](#)
- [Questions & Answers from the March 10 Webinar](#)

## **COVID-19 VACCINE**

### **SYMPTOMS**

- Q:** If an employee experiences symptoms 1-3 days after receiving the vaccine, should the employee report it to their employer and self-quarantine?
- A:** It is still currently a case-by-case determination because we have seen individuals who were vaccinated and two-to-four days later became positive for COVID-19. Did they contract COVID-19 before their initial series of the vaccine? If it is the second shot (Moderna or Pfizer) and the person becomes symptomatic, that's a much lower-risk scenario, although it still warrants an individual review. However, it is much more likely to be a response of the immune system to the vaccine versus a scenario of having contracted COVID-19.

### **IMMUNITY**

- Q:** How long does immunity last after being fully vaccinated with each of the three vaccines being offered in the United States (Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson)?

- A:** Regarding the strength of immunity or how much immunity is built up from these vaccines:
- First, we know that the immune response, compared to the native response from contracting and recovering from COVID, is up to 40 times greater with vaccination, meaning you develop 40 times the number of antibodies if you get vaccinated compared to contracting COVID by itself.
  - Second, if we look at and examine the longevity of antibodies, we know that those antibodies circulating do weaken after about three-to-six months; memory B cells will linger for up to eight months.
  - Third, the current recommendation for presumed immunity is six months. Early on we said after 90 days individuals may become susceptible again to infection after vaccination. It may increase to eight months as we learn more. But right now, we are landing at around six months.

What does that mean for these three vaccines? It means we all may need a booster as soon as six-to-eight months after the initial dose(s). Pfizer is conducting a phase-one clinical study on a booster approach. They have re-enrolled participants from their initial phase-one study. I spoke with a cardiologist in California who participated in this booster study and that data is pending. The findings will examine 1) whether it is safe, and 2) impacts from a chemical standpoint, meaning does a booster increase the longevity of an immune response beyond the first series of doses? As we are able to examine that data from Pfizer, it will be telling whether or not there will be a recommendation for a third booster. So, more to come, and that will certainly be a topic we will cover in the future.

- Q:** What happens if a vaccine time period is up and there is no booster? Would you recommend self-

quarantine for an employee if there has been an exposure?

**A:** The recommendation right now is to quarantine if there is a positive exposure 90 days or more days after vaccination. Is it across the board that you must quarantine? No, it is a case-by-case determination as we used to do for specific exposures. You must determine the severity of the exposure and determine the susceptibility of the individual.

**Q:** How many days after I get vaccinated can I go back to my “normal life?”

**A:** Fourteen days is the general rule of thumb it takes your immune system to respond appropriately and have enough immunity from the vaccine to go back to “normal life.” Right now the recommendation when out in public is to still wear your mask and practice social distancing. If you are in the setting of a home and you have friends over, no one needs to wear a mask in that scenario if everyone has had their full series of vaccines.

**Q:** Does the Johnson & Johnson vaccine contain antibodies to the variants? Are there any studies that compare the effectiveness of Johnson & Johnson as opposed to the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines?

**A:** Some studies have been conducted with the Johnson & Johnson vaccine against the Brazilian and South African variants. Johnson & Johnson did show efficacy, although not to the same level against the original version of the coronavirus with 70 percent effectiveness. It showed 64 percent efficacy against the South African variant and 61 percent efficacy against the Brazilian variant. Additional studies against the Brazilian P1 variant are needed and should be forthcoming.

#### **POST-VACCINE POSITIVE TEST**

**Q:** An employee just became positive incidentally during a pre-op test three days after getting his second vaccine. His first one was 21 days ago. What is the likelihood that he is contagious?

**A:** There is a low likelihood of contagion in this scenario. He may have had an infection before initial vaccine administration, and he persisted to have a positive response from a testing standpoint. We know that one out of five individuals can test positive up to three months after becoming infected. This is likely the case with the information that you have given me. He was infected, was positive, got his vaccination, was either asymptomatic or had very few symptoms, and never suspected that he was positive and was persistently positive even after his second vaccine. The likelihood of him being able to transmit COVID in that situation would be low. Why? It was 10 days out from his initial likely positive response. That would have proceeded his 21-day period in which he received his first shot.

#### **COMBO VACCINE**

**Q:** What is the likelihood of combining COVID-19 and flu vaccines in advance of this year's flu season? What kind of progress has been made in developing a combo vaccine?

**A:** I believe all three companies (Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson) are examining that combination. I don't have any particular data on the efficacy of that combination yet, but it is forthcoming. There is also an ongoing study in the United Kingdom combining Pfizer and Moderna in a series. It would be an initial dose from one and a second from the other to see whether that combination provides the same level or a higher level of efficacy as having two doses of the same vaccine.

**Q:** If a person gets the initial vaccine this year, should they also get a combination COVID-flu vaccine later in the year, when or if it's available?

**A:** If we eventually recommend a booster, in that scenario, the answer is clearly yes if the timing is appropriate. If we do recommend a booster, getting a combo would not be a problem as far as we know.

The data still needs to come out regarding the efficacy and safety of a combo vaccination.

**VACCINE HESITANCY**

- Q:** Some people are still concerned about the overall safety of the COVID vaccines since they were rushed into production. What is an appropriate response?
- A:** Considering the data that we have now, even as recent as the first of this month, both Pfizer and Moderna have said that they still see no indication of safety risks, even six months following full second doses among a significant number of people in their phase-three clinical studies. Enough time has elapsed for individuals to show that there are no interim long-term effects. We are talking about the low risk of anaphylaxis in response to the shot and low risk in connection with other immediate responses. We will still get data from one year after the initial vaccine. But again, out of the tens of millions of people and globally hundreds of millions of people who have been vaccinated, safety has been holding up.