

COVID Breakthrough Cases and the Importance of Vaccination

When three safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines became available in the United States (a Pfizer vaccine to prevent COVID-19 for people 12 years of age and older as well as Johnson & Johnson and Moderna for people age 18 and over), a decrease in cases and a lift on some mask restrictions soon followed. It seemed an end to the current pandemic was in sight. Now, a year and a half after COVID-19 was declared a pandemic, cases are on the rise once again – including among vaccinated individuals. Infections in the vaccinated population are referred to as “breakthrough” cases, and were fully expected when the vaccines were first developed.

Eileen Knightly, MHA, RN, BSN, chief nursing officer at OSF HealthCare Little Company of Mary Medical Center in Evergreen Park, Illinois sheds some light on these breakthrough cases – and why vaccination is so important.

Eileen Knightly, MHA, RN, BSN, Chief Nursing Officer, OSF HealthCare Little Company of Mary Medical Center

“Just because there are breakthrough cases doesn’t mean the vaccine is not effective. It means the vaccine is really effective because there are breakthrough cases and they are not hospitalized. And that’s the goal of vaccination is for our community to not succumb to a virus that we have a solution for.” (:18)

The combination of these breakthrough cases and the new delta variant has some people second guessing the vaccine. Those who have been vaccinated are worried they may now get COVID-19, and many who are unvaccinated are wondering if getting the vaccine now is worth the hassle.

Knightly reassures those who are vaccinated that they are still highly protected against the virus. However, if you do experience cold-like symptoms, or if you lose your sense of taste or smell, it may be wise to err on the side of caution and get a COVID-19 test if you are concerned.

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“It’s allergy season. Everyone’s eyes are watering, things are in the air. We have to be more cautious. Testing is widely available and quick tests are very accurate. Testing has become wonderful. It’s really important that if we don’t feel well, even a little unwell, that we are more cautious.” (:22)

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 170 million Americans have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, and more than 99.99% of fully vaccinated people have not had a breakthrough case resulting in hospitalization or death. If you are one of the vaccinated individuals who does end up with breakthrough infection, it is highly likely that you will be able to simply recover at home with some fluids, rest, and over-the-counter medications.

The CDC continues to study vaccine [effectiveness](#) to ensure COVID-19 vaccines are working as expected and urges those who have yet to get vaccinated to do so. The benefits of the vaccine far outweigh the risks, and Knightly encourages individuals to use science to guide your decision.

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“It’s really important to take that lens that says ‘I’m going to use only evidence to make my decision and evidence to carry forward.’ I think we need to be courageous. This is a worldwide pandemic that has gone on for a long time. We have a solution – please be part of the solution.” (:19)

Currently, the most effective tools in the fight against COVID-19 continue to be wearing your mask, washing your hands, watching your distance with others – and getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

Nurses at OSF Little Company of Mary recently shared their experiences and [why they chose to get vaccinated](#). Ultimately, it boils down to protecting not only yourself, but also [protecting](#) your loved ones and your community.

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“Trust science. Trust your providers. Continue to ask questions. Please don’t use social media as your advice – it’s not the source of truth. The source of truth is science in this – and it’s only a scientific conversation.” (:18)

At OSF HealthCare, we believe vaccinations against COVID-19 are an important tool to help end the pandemic – and we are now scheduling vaccination appointments for anyone 12-years-old and older. If you have not yet received your COVID-19 vaccine, [sign up today](#).