

Vaccination Without Hesitation

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the lives of people all around the globe in ways we never could have imagined. More than 3 million lives have been lost worldwide, and life as we knew it was changed in an instant. At the end of 2020, a significant milestone was reached in the fight against this virus: a safe and effective vaccine. Now, three vaccines have been approved for use in the U.S., and today in the U.S., nearly 100 million Americans have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, with more than 230 million doses administered. The vaccine is now widely available for Americans over the age of 16. However, there recently has been a decline in those who are seeking a vaccine.

Nurses at OSF HealthCare Little Company of Mary Medical Center in Evergreen Park, IL share their experiences – and explain why they chose to get vaccinated.

“It was really not a difficult decision for me because this disease is very serious. It threatens people’s lives and I’ve seen many people die from it. I see the vaccine as an opportunity not only to protect myself, but to protect my family and the patients that I serve. It gives me a sense of security.” says Deena Williams-Jones, RN, oncology, OSF HealthCare

Not only does the COVID-19 vaccine protect you, it also protects those around you.

“It’s more of a selfless act. You are not doing it just for yourself, you’re doing it for other people, for your loved ones and the people you work with – so it’s more than just you. I think that the more we can do to help each other, the better off we are,” added Irene Gray, RN, surgery, OSF HealthCare

Although there is a slight chance for getting COVID-19 even after being fully vaccinated, the chance of serious illness or even death from the virus is extremely slim. Eileen Knightly, chief nursing officer at OSF Little Company of Mary, explains that she was not only vaccinated to protect herself and to be able to see loved ones, she also got vaccinated to fight for those who could not – those who have lost their lives to this deadly virus.

“Many people got very, very sick and unfortunately succumbed to this disease. – and it wasn’t because they were old and frail. We had some healthy people come in who got very sick quickly and succumbed. So I’m obligated to them then, and to their courage, that I would get vaccinated,” says Knightly.

Some people are hesitant to get the COVID-19 vaccine due to the [side effects](#) they may experience – but this should not be a reason to avoid the vaccine altogether. Gray says doing your homework prior to your vaccination can help you prepare for any possible side effects, such as fatigue or a sore arm at the injection site.

“The process of getting the vaccine is really not bad. You come in and get your shot, wait for a few minutes to make sure you don’t have a reaction, and then make an appointment for your next vaccination. And you are aware of the potential side effects, so you can be prepared to maybe, or maybe not, experience those – because not everyone who gets the vaccine has those side effects,” explains Gray.

ICU nurse Sarah Baacke explains her experience after the virus was initially declared a pandemic, and how the development of a vaccine helps give front line workers peace of mind as they care for their patients.

“I came back from maternity leave a week before COVID hit, so I was very nervous. I was dressed to the nines with my PPE, changing my clothes before going home – everything. Now, I just feel more comfortable being able to care for patients and know that I am also protected,” details Baacke.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), people are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after their second dose in a two-dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or two weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson’s Janssen vaccine. On April 27th, the CDC released new [guidance](#) for those who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. This is a great stride forward in the long awaited “return to normalcy” that we have been waiting over a year for, and these measures will only continue to expand as more Americans are vaccinated.

“It is so important that we get this virus under control – and be able to embrace our loved ones. I thought, how could we have a disease that would not allow us to be able to hug one another and see the people we care about so much? So if that means me getting a vaccine so that I could hug my daughter and hug my parents – I think it is such an important thing for us to do,” Williams-Jones says.

“If you want things to go back to normal in any way – everybody keeps talking about normalcy and kids going back to school, people going back to work. It’s a chance. We can’t get better without people taking a chance,” adds Baacke.

The term “essential workers” is something that we have heard countless times throughout the course of this pandemic. These individuals have worked tirelessly to care for those who were positive for COVID-19 – putting their own lives on the line every day. Knightly’s message: do it for them.

“If you can’t figure out another reason, our healthcare workers and our world have really been through a lot. So I think we need to come together to really come up with a solution – and it’s really up to all of us to participate in that. So please do it. There is no other way to say it other than please vaccinate,” Knightly urges.

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 age 16 and older. If you have not yet received your COVID-19 vaccine, [sign up](#) today.