COVID-19 vaccines

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As I wrote this, the first Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved COVID-19 vaccine was front-page news as it began deployment throughout the country. Once the vaccine reached its destination, the media was on the scene again, showing the first people to get the injection. In addition, the FDA has approved a second vaccine for deployment.

The battle is not over. We need to keep our guard up and continue applying the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC also now has a section dedicated to vaccines, with the following eight things to know about COVID-19 vaccines:

1. The safety of COVID-19 vaccines is a top priority. The U.S. vaccine safety system ensures that all vaccines are as safe as possible.
   CDC has developed a new tool, "V Safe," as an additional layer of safety monitoring to increase our ability to rapidly detect any safety issues with COVID-19 vaccines. V Safe is a new smartphone-based, after-vaccination health checker for people who receive COVID-19 vaccines.
2. COVID-19 vaccination will help protect you from getting COVID-19. You need two doses of the currently available COVID-19 vaccine. A second shot three weeks after your first shot is needed to get the most protection the vaccine has to offer against this serious disease.
3. Right now, the CDC recommends that the COVID-19 vaccine be offered to health care personnel and residents of long-term care facilities, because the current supply of COVID-19 vaccine in the country is limited.
4. There currently is a limited supply of COVID-19 vaccine in the United States, but supply will increase in the weeks and months to come.
5. After COVID-19 vaccination, you may experience some side effects. This is a normal sign that your body is building protection. The side effects from COVID-19 vaccination may feel like flu and might even affect your ability to do daily activities, but they should go away in a few days.
6. Cost is not an obstacle to getting vaccinated against COVID-19. Vaccine doses purchased with taxpayer dollars will be given to the American people at no cost.
7. The first COVID-19 vaccine is being used under an emergency use authorization (EUA) from the FDA. Many other vaccines are still being developed and tested.
   If more COVID-19 vaccines are authorized or approved by the FDA, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) will quickly hold public meetings to review all available data about each vaccine and make recommendations for their use in the United States.
   All ACIP-recommended vaccines will be included in the U.S. COVID-19 vaccination program. The CDC continues to work at all levels with partners, including health care associations, on a flexible COVID-19 vaccination program that can accommodate different vaccines and adapt to different scenarios. State, local, tribal and territorial health departments have developed distribution plans to make sure that all recommended vaccines are available to their communities.
8. COVID-19 vaccines are one of many important tools to help us stop this pandemic. It's important for everyone to continue using all of the tools available to help stop this pandemic as we learn more about how COVID-19 vaccines work in real-world conditions. Cover your mouth and nose with a mask when around others, stay at least 6 feet away from others, avoid crowds and wash your hands often.

The CDC also states that among the benefits of getting a COVID-19 vaccine are:

- that a COVID-19 vaccination will help keep you from getting COVID-19;
- that experts believe that getting a COVID-19 vaccine may help keep you from getting seriously ill even if you do get COVID-19; and
- that getting vaccinated yourself also might protect people around you, including people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

In addition, experts continue to conduct more studies about the effect of COVID-19 vaccination on the severity of illness from COVID-19, as well as its ability to keep people from spreading the virus that causes COVID-19.

The best way to get the latest information on COVID-19 is to visit cdc.gov and click the COVID-19 link.

Keep an eye on each other.