



Post-Shot Life

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As I start this article, I have not received my vaccine yet. I am still struggling online with everyone else, refreshing the screen ten times a day. But I know that probably within the next month I'll receive my shot and life will go on. I know that it will be lots better, but what will it look like?



It seems that the latest advice from the CDC doesn't change much from our usual protocol:

"We're still learning how vaccines will affect the spread of COVID-19. After you've been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, you should keep taking precautions in public places like wearing a mask, staying six feet apart from others, and avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated spaces."

So many variables

With all the different messages from each of the different states and localities about what is and isn't allowed, it could make your head spin. If you compared the rules from the CDC, Arizona, Massachusetts and Texas, for example, you would think that we were dealing with 50 different problems. Of course, it's the case that the governors, and sometimes the mayors, are under an enormous amount of pressure from an enormous number of people. So many agendas.

There is pressure to open up venues, restaurants, and schools. Everybody has a valid need. But our teachers, of course, don't want get COVID, and who can blame them? President Biden has promised that all adults who want to will be vaccinated by May. But what about all those who don't want to get vaccinated? And what about all the teenagers?

I know that you probably feel the way I do: you just want to be safe. And it's getting nicer out, and you want to be socializing with friends and family, and shake off those winter blues.

So many variants

So far it looks like the vaccines are holding out fairly well against the variants. The more people who are vaccinated, the less ability the virus has to mutate and then create other variants.* At least that's what the news is reporting. If that's the case, why are we stuck on this plateau of cases and deaths not dropping in the way that we thought they might? Why are there still all these red zones? And what's going on in Europe? Many questions are as yet unanswered, but scientists learn more every day.

*I think it's a little naïve, though, to think that we won't all need some sort of booster shot at some point, probably at least annually.

After I'm vaccinated can I pass on COVID to others who may or may not be vaccinated?

Sort of. You can still be an asymptomatic carrier after vaccination. You could have a low dose or minimal dose COVID that you may not even be aware of and pass it on to someone who is not yet vaccinated. I was talking to my favorite nurse, by Telehealth, who has been in my doctor's office for a decade. She said, "I don't wear the mask for myself. I wear the mask to keep other people safe." That made it very clear to me right there. She's been vaccinated for a while but she recognizes the possibility that she could still pass on the virus.

After I'm vaccinated can I pass it on to children and teens who are not yet vaccinated?

Yes, but they probably won't get as sick. The understanding is that kids are okay if they get COVID. Most kids do pretty well with it, but

there are a few that end up with very difficult and serious cases, and there doesn't appear to be a clear pattern which kids these are.

Are the odds of passing it on based on the different vaccines that people are receiving?

As yet unknown. We are just beginning to get data. Israel is our big testing ground at this point. Because they have vaccinated such a high percent of their population, we're seeing the effects of what will hopefully be our future. They have exclusively used the Pfizer vaccine. But things are looking good. They are opening up to a degree that we thought might be months away.

How long after being vaccinated am I safe to go out and engage in a bit of "normal" life?

For each of the vaccines, the CDC has quoted different times but you can pretty much feel safe after two weeks and definitely by four. The question is: what does safe look like? You can probably go to the grocery store and not be worried about catching things or passing them on if you wear a mask. Small indoor gatherings with other vaccinated people seem to be low risk. The risk from exposure to unvaccinated people is not yet known.

The takeaway

Even after vaccination, we should all continue to take the safety precautions that we have been taking: six feet apart, masks, avoiding large gatherings. But we can begin to open up and see people and hug our friends. All of that sounds very good to me at this point.

I look forward to not writing about COVID anymore. I'm excited for the time when I can be talking about other issues. We are almost there! Please try to stay strong and hang in for this last little bit.

Namaste,
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