

COVID-19 2022 Update: Vaccines

[PODCAST TRANSCRIPT – June 15, 2022]

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Bonsall, Lisa

Hi, this is Lisa Bonsall, senior clinical editor for Lippincott NursingCenter. Today, I'm speaking with Collette Bishop Hendler, Editor in Chief for Lippincott Solutions. On May 12th, 2022, we held our webinar “Navigating the wake of COVID.” Today, we are answering the questions from attendees.

Hi Collette, can you please begin by summarizing the vaccines that are currently available?

Collette Hendler

Yeah, sure. We have three vaccines that remain on the US market, Pfizer's BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, which is an mRNA vaccine. And we have the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, which is also an mRNA vaccine. And then Johnson and Johnson's Janssen COVID-19 vaccine and that differs from the others in that it's a viral vector vaccine. And as you know, these vaccines remain the best protection against COVID-19 and they target the virus' spike protein. The Omicron and also the Delta variant, they contain additional changes in the spike protein over what was seen in the other variants, and because of these changes in the spike protein, sera from vaccinated individuals or those previously infected with the virus, they may not effectively neutralize the Omicron variant which may reduce the vaccine's protection, but anybody that gets vaccinated typically has less severe illness and the vaccines have reduced hospitalizations and death from all of the variants so far of COVID-19.

The US Food and Drug Administration, they've recently limited the authorized use of the Janssen vaccine to individuals 18 years of age and older. And the J&J vaccine is used basically when other vaccines aren't available or clinically appropriate or when individuals in this age group elect not to have a COVID-19 vaccine otherwise. So the reason that the FDA limited the use it was after they reported cases of thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome that occurred one to two weeks following the administration of the J&J vaccine and this potentially fatal syndrome actually causes blood clots and actually low platelet count.

Bonsall, Lisa

Thanks, Collette. So the Johnson and Johnson vaccine is authorized for use in individuals 18 years of age and older when other vaccines aren't available or clinically appropriate. What is meant by clinically appropriate?

Hendler, Collette

Well, clinically appropriate just means that the vaccine must be appropriate for that individual's clinical situation. You know, for example, a vaccine wouldn't be clinically appropriate for someone if they have an allergy to the vaccine or any of its ingredients.

Bonsall, Lisa

Great. Thank you. Should individuals in congregate living settings, such as nursing homes, residential housing and group homes, get a second booster?

Hendler, Collette

Well, currently the CDC recommends a second booster for adults ages 50 and older and people ages 12 years and older who are moderately or severely immunocompromised. So anybody in congregate living that fits that criteria should get a second booster, but they don't otherwise specify that people in congregate living should have a booster.

Bonsall, Lisa

Our next question is why isn't antibody testing used to determine protection against COVID-19?

Hendler, Collette

Well, the COVID antibody tests, they were just designed to really help identify people who may have had prior COVID infection. They really weren't designed or approved by the FDA to evaluate a person's level of immunity or protection from COVID-19 after vaccination and so there is a risk of not interpreting these tests properly. If people would take a look to see the level of immunity that people have, so it's not recommended to use them to determine the level of immunity because then if they would be falsely interpreted, people may not take the necessary precautions that they need to take, putting them at risk for COVID.

Bonsall, Lisa

That makes a lot of sense. Thanks. Collette. Can you talk about natural immunity from getting COVID? If someone is fully vaccinated and boosted and gets COVID-19, should they get another booster?

Hendler, Collette

Yeah, sure. So natural immunity, it's a type of active immunity and it results when a person becomes infected by an organism and then the organism triggers the body's immune system to produce antibodies to the specific organism. Another type of active immunity is vaccine-induced immunity. And you know that's acquired by introducing a killed or weakened form of the disease organism through vaccination.

So if a person has natural immunity or vaccine-induced immunity and becomes exposed to that disease organism in the future, then your immune system would recognize it and produce antibodies needed to fight it. So both types of active immunity last for a bit of time, but researchers aren't really sure how long COVID immunity lasts, especially as the viruses continue to evolve. So even if you've been vaccinated, boosted and have been sick with COVID, you should receive boosters when recommended to maintain that immunity.

Bonsall, Lisa

Thank you, Collette, and thank you for answering all of these questions submitted by our attendees. To our listeners, you can access the full webinar at nursingcenter.com. Thank you so much.

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