



HENRY FORD
TRANSPLANT INSTITUTE

FLASH UPDATE

ON COVID VACCINATION TO TRANSPLANT RECIPIENTS

We at the Henry Ford Transplant Institute are pleased to provide an update to you regarding COVID-19, the risks of infection, and the value of available vaccines.

Transplant recipients were not included in the original trials of vaccination, but we are beginning to gather some data related to transplant recipients. You may be aware of a recent article published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), published online:

[March 15, 2021. doi:10.1001/jama.2021.4385](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2021.4385)

This research study is looking at the antibody response of transplant recipients to the first of two doses of the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines. In this report:

- The authors looked at measurable antibodies in patients * and found that 17% of patients had detectable antibodies.
- This, of course, means that 83% did not have measurable antibodies present in their blood after the first vaccine dose.
- All these transplant recipients were on medications to suppress their immune system and protect their new organ. The early results, as noted, were somewhat disappointing but not unexpected.

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We bring this to your attention for several reasons.

- It is important to understand that the testing was done after the first of two doses.
- It is possible that the antibody response will improve following the second dose.
- It is also important to point out that the authors did not measure the important outcome of infections which is what the clinical trials focused on regarding the vaccines (looking to see how well the vaccine protected individuals from both infection but importantly serious infection).
- And, there are other aspects of the immune system and response that have not been studied well and may be involved with our protection against the virus.

It is important for all of us, including transplant recipients to:

- Remain vigilant during this pandemic and continue to protect ourselves as best we can from coming into contact with others who may be infected.
- We believe vaccination to be safe, necessary and are continuing to collect data on efficacy for organ recipients (or how well the vaccine protects us from infection and serious infection). There is no current recommendation for transplant recipients to either avoid vaccine or to receive more than the standard two doses that are prescribed. It is critical that our patients and all of us continue to follow the basic principles of safety during this pandemic which include:
 1. Avoid people who are ill. Immunosuppression makes you, as an organ recipient, more susceptible to illness of all types!
 2. Avoid public gatherings and public spaces where distancing cannot be readily achieved
 3. Continue to follow the 6-foot social distancing rule
 4. Continue to wear a layered mask when outside your home or when people from “outside your home” come into your home
 5. Hand washing with soap and water is critical for 20 seconds (singing “Happy Birthday” 2x through) especially when hands are soiled
 6. Avoid touching your face, eyes and nose and use hand sanitizer frequently
 7. Continue to take your transplant medications as prescribed unless directed to change them by your provider

As additional information becomes available regarding our transplant population, we will work to interpret and share any updated recommendations that come forward. Thank you for your continued commitment to keeping yourself and your new organ safe!