

Community Weekly

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Dispelling Myths Pt. 1

By Cynthia Morrow, MD, MPH

Last week, the Roanoke City and Alleghany Health Districts (RCAHD) moved into Phase 2 of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. This means that now anyone in our districts who is age 16 or older and who wants to get vaccinated is eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccine. Although everyone is now eligible, there are still quite a few people who are reluctant to get vaccinated. This is in part because misinformation about the vaccines persists.

The reality is that the overwhelming evidence from clinical trials and post-marketing surveillance demonstrates that each of the three COVID-19 vaccines currently available (Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson) is very safe. Here are some common misconceptions, and the truth behind each one:

**Myth #1 The vaccines have a lot of serious side effects.**

The vaccines are very safe. The most common side effects of the vaccine are swelling, redness, and pain around the site of injection, as well as headache, muscle pain, nausea, fever and chills for a short time following the shot. These symptoms are usually mild and last only for a day or two. If you do experience side effects, that can be a positive sign because it means that your immune system is having a good response to the vaccine.

**Myth #2 The vaccines use a live version of COVID-19.**

Unlike some vaccines which contain live but weakened forms of a virus (such as mumps or measles vaccines), none of the three COVID-19 vaccines on the market contains the virus. None of the vaccines can give you the disease.

**Myth #3 The vaccine contains a microchip tracking device.**

The COVID-19 vaccines do not contain microchips or tracking information. There were false statements posted about this on some social media sites.

**Myth #4 I can't get the COVID-19 vaccine if I have allergies.**

According to the CDC, people can get a COVID-19 vaccine even if they have allergies to:

- Foods
- Pets
- Environmental
- Medications

The only exceptions are people who have had a significant allergic reaction in the past to an ingredient in the COVID-19 vaccines or to the vaccine itself. If you've had an allergic reaction to other vaccines in the past, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends talking to your doctor before getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

If you have questions about the vaccine, talk to your doctor about your concerns. Next week we'll explore more of the myths that surround the vaccine. We have now delivered over 150,000 first and second doses within the Roanoke City and Alleghany Health districts, and with every shot, we are one step closer to ending this pandemic.