



**National
Association of
Neonatal
Nurses**

COVID-19 Vaccination

Position Statement #3072

NANN Board of Directors
May 2021

To date, more than 130 million cases of COVID-19 have been reported globally. In the United States, more than 30 million cases and more than 500 thousand deaths have been reported (Johns Hopkins University & Medicine, n.d.). As frontline providers, nurses bear witness to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to following guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and your institution—including the use of masks, social distancing, and frequent thorough handwashing—vaccination is a vital step in controlling the spread of COVID-19. As the professional voice of neonatal nurses, the National Association of Neonatal Nurses (NANN) recommends nurses get vaccinated.



Association Position

The National Association of Neonatal Nurses (NANN) supports the COVID-19 vaccination recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Vaccination is a personal choice. We recognize that data regarding the various COVID-19 vaccines continue to evolve, and we encourage nurses to educate themselves as new information arises. The current vaccines have undergone rigorous clinical trials and are safe and effective against COVID-19. The global impact of the virus has been devastating. Vaccination is our best defense. As such, NANN recommends nurses get vaccinated against COVID-19.

Background and Significance

As of April 3, 2021, more than 130 million cases of COVID-19 have been reported globally. Since the first reported case on January 21, 2020, the United States has experienced more than 30 million confirmed cases resulting in more than a half-million deaths (Johns Hopkins University and Medicine, n.d.). All individuals are presumed to be susceptible to the COVID-19 virus; however, illness presentation may vary. Individuals at risk for severe disease include people older than 60 years and people with chronic medical conditions. All age groups have experienced asymptomatic and mild versions of the disease.

Nurses are impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic both physically and psychologically. Frequent contact with infected individuals makes nurses more vulnerable to infection than the general population. According to *Lost on the Frontline* (The Guardian and Kaiser Health News, 2021), more than 3,500 healthcare workers in the United States have died from coronavirus since March 2020. Thirty-two percent were nurses. Nurses must care for and protect themselves from the virus first so that they may protect and care for their patients.

Vaccination is the first step in the prevention of illness from COVID-19. As the various vaccines emerge, it is essential to understand the types of vaccine platforms and their efficacy and safety profile. Three types of vaccine platforms are currently in use: mRNA, viral vector, and protein subunit (currently in phase 3 clinical trials). None of these vaccine platforms can convey the COVID-19 infection. The vaccines work by expressing a protein from the virus, allowing your immune system to generate antibodies (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c). Physical symptoms may be experienced after vaccination and represent the body's natural immune response.

COVID-19 vaccinations are held to the same safety standards as all other vaccines. In December 2020, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) granted Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for two COVID-19 vaccines to respond to the public health emergency caused by the pandemic. An mRNA vaccine developed by Pfizer and BioNTech was the first COVID-19 vaccine to receive EUA on December 11, 2020. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is approved for use in individuals aged 16 years or older and is given as a two-dose vaccine,

3 weeks apart (Pfizer Inc. & BioNTech Manufacturing GmbH, 2021). On December 18, 2020, a vaccine developed by Moderna received EUA by the FDA for use against COVID-19. Moderna's vaccine is approved for individuals aged 18 years or older and is given as a two-dose vaccine, 1 month apart (Moderna US, Inc., 2021). Both the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are more than 90% efficacious in protecting people from COVID-19 (Baden et al., 2021; Polack et al., 2020). Preliminary findings for mRNA vaccines did not identify safety concerns for vaccinated pregnant people (Shimabukuro et al., 2021).

Emerging variants of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, have garnered increased concerns. SARS-CoV-2, like other viruses, experience changes in their genetic code (also known as a mutation) over time. In fact, within the United States and globally, there are multiple variants of SARS-CoV-2. Sometimes these mutations emerge and disappear relatively quickly. Other times they persist. Scientists continue to track and research SARS-CoV-2 variants actively. As it stands, the COVID-19 vaccines that are approved for emergency use are believed to "provide at least some protection against new virus variants because these vaccines elicit a broad immune response involving a range of antibodies and cells. Therefore, changes or mutations in the virus should not make vaccines completely ineffective" (The effects of virus variants on COVID-19 vaccines, 2021).

Nurses are essential to the response to COVID-19. As members of the most trusted profession in the United States, nurses are positioned to inform each other and the consumer about the importance of vaccination. Many factors affect one's decision to receive a vaccine or not. Hesitancy is natural but should be countered with facts. By arming oneself with accurate information about the available vaccines, nurses can reinforce confidence and build trust.

Recommendations

1. Nurses should be vaccinated against COVID-19.
2. Nurses should keep abreast of the most updated information regarding vaccination.
3. Nurses should convey accurate information about the types of COVID-19 vaccines as well as their safety and efficacy.
4. Nurses should develop strategies to reinforce confidence in vaccination against the COVID-19 infection.

Conclusions

Vaccine hesitancy is one of the top threats to public health. Although all available COVID-19 vaccines were researched, developed, and authorized for emergency use in record time, this was mainly due to immense collaborations between groups. Development of the COVID-19 vaccines had to meet the same high standards as all other vaccines. Becoming vaccinated against COVID-19 is our strongest defense and best available intervention to keep ourselves, our families, and our

patients safe. The more fully vaccinated people, the closer we become to herd immunity.

NANN encourages all nurses to educate themselves on the vaccines. Although vaccination is a personal choice, NANN acknowledges the need to protect our vulnerable patient population. As such, NANN recommends getting vaccinated against COVID-19.

Retired 2025

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