

Wisconsin Foundation and Alumni Association: COVID-19 vaccines and side effects

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MADISON, WI (March 29, 2021) — As more people become eligible for COVID-19 vaccination, more questions arise about how the vaccines work and why some people experience side effects. Can vaccinated people still spread COVID to those who are unvaccinated? Why do people who have already had COVID-19 still need to get the vaccine? Do they experience more side effects than people who never had the illness? Is it true that COVID “long haulers” are seeing improvement in symptoms after getting vaccinated — and if so, why?

On the next UW Now Livestream: a Q & A session with a panel of experts who will discuss what everyone should know about the COVID-19 vaccines. The talk will be moderated by Mike Knetter, president and CEO of the Wisconsin Foundation and Alumni Association.

Featured guests:

James Conway, MD, is a pediatric infectious disease specialist and professor of pediatrics. He is the associate director of the UW's Global Health Institute, the medical director of the UW Health Immunization Program, and director of the Office of Global Health at the School of Medicine and Public Health. He is a fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), serving in the sections on Infectious Diseases and International Child Health, and received an AAP Special Achievement Award in 2009 for his immunization projects. He is also a member of the board of directors of the Wisconsin AAP, where he serves as chair of the Committee on Immunizations and Infectious Diseases and represents the WI-AAP on the Wisconsin Council on Immunization Practice.

Hannah Kirking, MD, is a medical epidemiologist and a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Public Health Service. She is the leader of CDC-directed efforts to counter COVID-19 in Wisconsin. One of the first recipients of UW-Madison's graduate/professional certificate in global health, she responds to public health emergencies and disease outbreaks across the United States and beyond, including Kenya, Myanmar, Liberia, and the U.S. border with Mexico. During the Ebola outbreak of 2013-16, she was embedded in rural counties in Liberia to help local teams cope with the disease.

David O'Connor, PhD, is the UW Medical Foundation (UWMF) Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine. In close collaboration with Dr. Tom Friedrich, O'Connor's laboratory leads an international network of investigators studying COVID-19 to test vaccines and medical countermeasures. O'Connor and Friedrich have been responsible for sequencing SARS-CoV-2 genomes from cases throughout Dane and Milwaukee Counties to understand how these viruses are moving throughout Wisconsin. O'Connor is also actively involved in HIV/AIDS research with the goal of developing a vaccine. He is also conducting Zika research to understand when and how the virus leads to fetal abnormalities and what interventions could prevent or reverse those outcomes.

Nasia Safdar, PhD, is a professor in the Division of Infectious Diseases, the vice chair for research in the Department of Medicine, and the medical director of Infection Control at UW Hospital and Clinics. She leads the department in its mission to reduce and prevent health care-associated infections by identifying, testing, and implementing novel interventions. Because of her work and research in this area, Dr. Safdar received a President's Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers in 2017, the highest honor bestowed by the U.S. government on outstanding scientists and engineers beginning their independent careers. In 2014, she received the John Q. Sherman Award for Excellence in Patient Engagement. Dr. Safdar is a fellow of the American College of Physicians and a member of the Society of Internal General Medicine.

When: Tuesday, March 30, at 7 p.m. CDT

Where: The UW Now Livestream: allwaysforward.org/uwnow/covid-19-vaccines-and-side-effects/