

Please remember that COVID-19 is running rampant right now. Hospitals are overrun, supplies are running short and healthcare personnel are stressed. A unified response (in the form of wide scale vaccination) is the only way we are going to see our way back to “normal.” A medical professional has provided this analogy and information to better explain how COVID19 is spread along with vaccine questions:

Imagine there are robbers that keep breaking into houses around Shaker Pines Lake. They are not only stealing belongings, but they’re also hurting people, too. But then, someone takes pictures of their faces and the cars they are driving. Now we have a way to protect ourselves and our belongings. Coronavirus (COVID-19) is like the gang of robbers. We know what it looks like and how it moves around. To be prepared against robbers, our first line of defense is to lock our doors and use security systems. If the robbers get in, we have weapons to fight them off. Similarly, to be prepared for coronavirus, we can socially distance and wear masks as our first line of defense. The coronavirus vaccine is our weapon if the virus gets into our bodies. The best way to keep the robbers from coming back again and again and again into our neighborhood is to make it so they can’t get into our houses anymore. The more people that wear masks and get vaccinated, the fewer infections in our community and the faster we can all get back to our lakeside living.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (Summarized from New Britain Herald article by Michelle McDade MD)

How does the COVID-19 vaccine work?

Previous vaccines have consisted of either a dead virus or a weakened form of a living virus. The vaccine for COVID-19 is entirely different. It is made from something called messenger RNA (or mRNA). This is a fancy term for a molecule that acts as a blueprint to make the spike protein that is on the outside of the coronavirus. Introducing this blueprint into our bodies (via the vaccine) prompts the body to create little spike proteins similar to the appearance of the COVID virus. These little spike proteins that the body makes in response to the vaccine triggers our own body’s immune system to start killing the virus off (because it recognizes that it shouldn’t be there) if we get infected. This means that after someone is immunized, if the person gets exposed to the actual coronavirus, their body will already recognize the spike protein and already have a defense mechanism ready to destroy it.

Could I get COVID-19 from the vaccine?

No. The vaccine does not contain and does not cause COVID-19. The mRNA in the vaccine is quickly destroyed by the body and doesn’t leave a trace other than our own immune system’s protection. The COVID-19 vaccine DOES NOT CHANGE YOUR DNA. However, after receiving your vaccine, you may experience body aches, fatigue, or flu-like symptoms for 24 hours. This is a GOOD THING. This is actually an indicator that the body is responding appropriately to the spike protein and creating a defense against COVID-19. It means Spike Protein your body recognizes that the spike protein should not be there and is trying to destroy it! It does NOT mean that the vaccine gave you COVID-19 or the flu!

How long will the protective effects of the vaccine last?

It is currently unknown. Early studies suggest the immune effects may last 1-2 years, but there may be need for additional booster shots. Experts estimate boosters may be required every year.

Can I just wait to get the vaccine?

The important concept to understand is that if many people receive the vaccine in a short period of time, then the COVID-19 virus cases can be dramatically minimized. If large groups of people hold

off on vaccination, then the COVID-19 virus will thrive in those populations.

Should I worry that this vaccine got made too quickly?

Research into the mRNA technology used for the COVID-19 vaccines began 30 years ago. It is not new at all. The technology has been used to create vaccines for Zika virus as well as Rabies. The “recipe” for these previous mRNA vaccines was adjusted to create the spike protein for COVID-19. The scientists did not need to start from scratch – they simply needed to change the recipe.

Do I still need to wear a mask and socially distance if I get vaccinated?

Yes. We know that once an individual is vaccinated, that individual is ~95% protected from getting sick with COVID-19 symptoms. However, right now we don't know if the vaccine prevents individuals from carrying the virus and spreading it to others despite not having symptoms themselves. Studies on this still have to be conducted. Recommendations are still to wear masks, socially distance and perform hand hygiene even after receiving the vaccine until more information is available.

AGAIN, AS ALWAYS, PLEASE DISCUSS ALL MEDICAL CARE AND MEDICAL DECISIONS WITH YOUR PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN/PRACTITIONER