



FACTS AND FICTION OF VACCINES

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THE VACCINE DOES NOT PREVENT DEATHS – FALSE

Covid-19 vaccines reduce your chance of severe disease or dying by more than 90%, hospital records and research in the UK, US and Canada during 2021 have shown – and the latest J&J study among inoculated health workers in SA has had a similar result. More than 480,000 health workers got the J&J shot from February to May and it protected 96% of them from death and two-thirds (66%) from severe illness resulting in hospitalisations.

Infectious diseases specialist Dr Jantjie Taljaard, stated: “In Tygerberg Hospital’s Intensive Care Unit during the third wave, all the people admitted, were not vaccinated. Please save your own life and get the jab, I did!”.

THE VACCINE SIDE-EFFECTS ARE MORE SERIOUS THAN COVID – FALSE

Vaccines can have side effects and some people get them, but they are usually mild to moderate and disappear within 48 hours. Out of every million people vaccinated, fewer than five people may develop life-threatening complications, which can be medically treated. These rare adverse events include a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis), blood clots, inflammation of the heart and the Guillain Barre Syndrome which causes weakness. But the risk of dying of severe Covid-19 is many times greater than the risk of a life-threatening adverse event. For example, you have an eight times greater risk of developing severe cerebral blood clots from Covid-19 than the AstraZeneca vaccine, an Oxford University study showed.

If every person in the Western Cape got a shot, fewer than 20 would have severe side effects. Professor Graeme Meintjes, an infectious disease doctor at Groote Schuur Hospital, stated: “I have worked in the Covid wards at Groote Schuur for the last 18 months. I have seen hundreds of people die as a result of Covid. I have not seen a single death due to the vaccination yet.”

THE VACCINE IS NO USE AT STOPPING INFECTIONS – FALSE

It is true that Covid-19 vaccines do not prevent all infections. However, “breakthrough infections”, that develop 28 days after a jab, are usually mild to moderate, or asymptomatic. Covid-19 vaccines reduce the chance of spreading the virus by roughly 40% in households, studies have found.

“Ideally, we would like a vaccine that also stop us from getting infected with the coronavirus but until then, the benefits of reducing severe disease and not dying, and decreasing the burden on hospitals, are why you should be vaccinated,” stated Dr Lisa Frigati, a paediatric infectious disease specialist at Tygerberg Hospital.

YOUNGER ADULTS ARE NOT AT RISK OF SEVERE COVID, THUS THE VACCINES DO THEM MORE HARM THAN GOOD – FALSE

“Younger adults are less likely to get severe disease when compared to older people, but they can get very ill and die from Covid-19. I just did my morning rounds and apart from seeing several people below the age of 35, we were lucky to find an ICU bed for a 28-year-old female patient who was not coping on her high-flow nasal oxygen in the ward,” said Dr Taljaard on Friday. Age is not the only risk factor for severe disease and death. Conditions like being overweight, having HIV or diabetes – which are very common in young people in SA – increase the risk for severe disease and death up to three times.

The risks for blood clots and inflammation of the heart muscle (myocarditis) are extremely low with vaccination and considerably lower than if a person gets Covid-19. Blood clots and myocarditis are common causes of death in people hospitalised with Covid-19. In other words, life-threatening conditions are more likely to be prevented by vaccination than caused by the vaccines.

IF I GET COVID THEN I HAVE NATURAL IMMUNITY, AND THEN I HAVE NO NEED FOR A VACCINE – FALSE

Natural immunity and vaccine-derived immunity are different, but they complement one another and improve the complexity and efficacy of the immune response developed against Covid-19.

It is currently recommended to get the vaccine irrespective of whether you had Covid-19 previously. The immunity developed after a natural infection is not durable and starts to wane after some months. The vaccine can therefore act as a ‘booster’ and hopefully extend your protection for longer. Knowledge about the duration of immunity after infections and after vaccines, and boosting by vaccines, is still evolving. If you have been sick, rather wait two to three months before getting a vaccine and then get only one.

IF YOU HAVE DIABETES, HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, OBESITY, HEART FAILURE, TB, HIV OR OTHER CONDITIONS, THE VACCINE IS A RISK TO YOUR HEALTH – FALSE

During the pandemic your best chance of staying alive, particularly if you have a “chronic medical condition”, is to get a vaccine. Comorbidities put you at higher risk of getting Covid and ending up in ICU, or dying. Vaccines reduce the risk of hospitalisation by 29 times, a US CDC report on Friday finds.

COVID-19 VACCINATIONS EFFECT FERTILITY – FALSE

This fake news has no scientific basis. In the Covid 19 studies there was no effect on fertility with equal numbers of patients becoming pregnant in the vaccinated and unvaccinated groups. But a pregnant person who develops Covid-19 has an increased risk of losing her baby and an increased risk of becoming very ill and dying from severe Covid-19, records across the world and confirmed in SA shows. There is also the risk of a mother transmitting Covid-19 to their unborn baby.

THE VACCINE WILL HAVE LONG-TERM, HARMFUL EFFECTS ON YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM – FALSE

Worldwide more than 4-billion people have been vaccinated since December without any long-term complications (different to short-term side effects) reported to date. No known vaccine that has been on the market for decades has shown any long-term side effects. The effect of vaccines happens immediately (allergy) or during the first few weeks after the jab.

Over time, the immune system destroys the vaccine, and it calms down as it develops a memory of the event. Our immune system has a very rich database (memory) of all the bacteria and viruses we have been exposed to during our lifetime.

However – unless you are exposed to a similar virus again – it stays silent. When exposed again, it will immediately and very effectively attack the virus.

It is untrue that we do not have long-term data on Covid-19 vaccines. They have been tested on humans since July 2020 and continuous safety reports are being admitted to the regulatory authorities.

Unvaccinated people, who have survived Covid-19, are among those vulnerable to the long-term and severe effects of the disease.

COVID-19 VACCINES CANNOT BE SAFE BECAUSE THEY WERE DEVELOPED AT RECORD SPEED – FALSE

Funding was poured into developing a Covid-19 vaccine and the world’s best scientists collaborated on this project, which had unprecedented political and financial support. All the phases of the clinical trials needed for developing a safe vaccine were followed, sometimes in parallel instead of succession, speeding up the process.