

COLUMN

Your COVID-19 queries

Following our series of articles on COVID-19 the past few weeks, we have received more than two dozen questions from our readers. We have integrated them in this Q&A:

Are the vaccines safe for those pregnant?

Yes, the COVID-19 vaccines are safe for pregnant mothers, proven by the millions of shots administered to women in the various stages of pregnancy. The FDA strongly recommends the vaccines for those who are pregnant to prevent pre-term abortion/miscarriages and death of fetus in the womb.

Does the vaccine alter the DNA?

This is a myth propagated in the social media. The vaccine does not alter the DNA, does not have a virus in it, does not cause COVID-19 or Alzheimer's, does not have a micro-chip in it, does not change a person's blood type, and does not cause infertility or cancer or any other disease among healthy individuals.

How effective are the vaccines for kids?

Pfizer, for one, reported its new "lower-dose COVID-19 vaccine showed 90.7% efficacy (95% CI 67.7-98.3) against symptomatic infection for kids ages 5 to 11. The FDA is releasing its final approval of this vaccines for this age group. Children eligible to get the vaccines should get it to be safe. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, there were 130,000 new COVID-19 cases among kids for the week ending October 14, 2021, alone. The cases among children are on the rise and so with hospitalization.

The stupid mandate against masked by Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds and the dangerous medically-baseless ideas of other arrogant leaders like her have obviously contributed to the gravity of the pandemic across the nation. It is one thing to mandate in favor of a protective strategy; it is another to mandate against one and endanger people. Are they epidemiologists? These politicians could be challenged in court and held liable for their words and actions. Why don't they follow the federal guidelines?

Any new ingredient in the Booster?

No, the ingredient in the Booster shot is the same as the first two shots. So, individuals who had any brand of the two shots and did not develop any complications will also most likely not have any untoward reaction to the Booster,

which is not a new formulation. The booster is specially beneficial for those who are at high risk, those immunocompromised, and those who have co-morbidities (high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, COPD, asthma, etc.).

What if I skip the Booster?

The immunity/protection (antibody titer) following the first two shots of any brand of COVID-19 vaccines wanes after 6 months (the titer goes down to around 60 percent or so from the 90-95 percent titer level conferred by the vaccines), so the immunity is reduced by about 40 percent. This figure represents the risk after 6 months. Getting the Booster will raise the antibody titer (protective immunity) back up to 95.6 percent or higher. This is the right way to go, even for children. Discuss your concerns with your physician.

What is mix-and-match?

Clinical studies have shown the safety and efficacy of giving one brand of the COVID-19 vaccines for the first shot (example: Pfizer's) and a different brand (Moderna's) for the second shot. The same thing with the Booster: If one had Pfizer or Moderna for the first 2 shots, the booster shot could be either of the two. If equally available, take the same brand for the second shot or for Booster. If not, mix and match is similarly safe and effective.

How long do I stay test-negative?

After testing negative for COVID-19, a person remains negative as long as he/she does not get exposed to, or actually get the SARS-CoV2 virus from people who have the virus (even if they do not have symptoms). A negative test in the morning could turn positive when tested the same afternoon or the following day if the individual does not wear facemask and does not do social distancing and get exposed to infected persons. The risk of negative turning into positive is at least ten times higher among the unvaccinated, unprotected.

Is natural immunity better?

No, natural immunity is not as protective, not as stable, and not as long-lasting as the immunity from the vaccines. Natural immunity will not be sufficient to protect people from getting COVID-19 (again). Many unvaccinated individuals who have died from COVID-19, did not survive to benefit from natural. The best strategy is to get vaccinated as soon as possible.

Did the court rule on a vaccine-mandate?

Yes, according to the Wall Street Journal, "In nearly every instance, COVID vaccine mandates are holding up in court," just like the federal mandate requiring all children to have the required vaccinations before enrollment which has held up for decades and protected billions of children around the world. Medically speaking, only a prompt federal vaccine mandate for all eligible

persons will end this pandemic in the United States sooner than later. The body of the unvaccinated acts as a host and becomes a reservoir-factory of the virus, where it replicates and mutates to a deadlier strain, which will exponentially spread to millions more and prolong this pandemic. Without a host, the virus self-destruct.

Is there a pill for COVID-19?

While hundreds of potential oral medications to prevent or treat COVID-19 are undergoing clinical trials, Merck's COVID-19-antiviral pill is the only one so far scheduled to be reviewed and scrutinized by the US-FDA on November 30, 2021.

Are you against the freedom of choice?

No, I am not against civil rights or personal liberty to choose, as long as the choice does not cause harm or kill other people. Let me echo my rhetorical questions to clarify my sentiment about freedom of choice: Does a driver of a school bus full of children have the right to choose to drive the bus over a cliff because he does not want to live anymore? Would you allow people who have active tuberculosis or any deadly infectious disease, who refuse treatment (as their constitutional right) to spread the disease and kill thousand others? Would a federal mandate to compel these persons (like those who refuse the COVID-19 vaccines) to get the shots to protect them and the general public not be justified?

Sadly, the abuse of freedom, political correctness, and cancel culture today are standing in the way of safe public health. I strongly believe national societal interest and safety must always prevail over individual civil rights, especially in a pandemic which has so far killed more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million around the world. King Solomon must be turning in his grave.

Philip S. Chua, MD, FACS, FPCS, a Cardiac Surgeon Emeritus based in Northwest Indiana and Las Vegas, Nevada, is an international medical lecturer/author, a Health Advocate, and Chairman of the Filipino United Network-USA, a 501(c)3 humanitarian foundation in the United States. Websites: philipSchua.com, Today.SPSAtoday.com, and FUN8888.com Email: scalpelpen@gmail.com