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Vaccines Safe, Side Effects More Frequent After Second Dose

Health officials are assuring the public about the safety of COVID-19 vaccines, while reminding them of common side effects, especially after the second dose of the series.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported that safety monitoring for the two vaccines approved for emergency use has been “the most intense and comprehensive in U.S. history.” The findings in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report are similar to those of clinical trials from the manufacturers Moderna and Pfizer, which show injection site pain, fatigue, headache and muscle pain were most frequently reported, with a higher frequency after the second dose.

Humboldt County Public Health Nurse and Clinic and Communicable Disease Program Supervisor Hava Phillips said that individuals who have had a reaction to a vaccine in the past, or may have an allergy, should discuss vaccination with their health care provider.

“It is not uncommon for people to experience a sore arm and swelling where the shot was given, or symptoms such as fever, body aches and fatigue as part of the process of building immunity,” Phillips said. “This is especially true after the second dose, when the body's immune response is stronger. Severe reactions to the vaccine, requiring medical care, are rare and usually happen within the first 24 hours after getting the shot.”

Getting vaccinated is one of the most powerful tools in protecting individuals and communities and ultimately in ending the pandemic, Phillips said. “We’re moving as swiftly as supplies will allow, so take the first appointment you’re offered,” she said. “We’ve gotten this far by working together and vaccination is the next step.”

To reduce injection site pain and discomfort, the CDC recommends using or exercising your arm and/or applying a clean, cool, wet washcloth over the area. To reduce discomfort from fever, drink plenty of fluids and dress lightly.

The CDC recommends not taking over-the-counter medications such as ibuprofen, aspirin, antihistamines or acetaminophen before getting vaccinated to prevent side effects, because it is unknown how these medications could affect the vaccine’s effectiveness. Individuals can take these medications to relieve post-vaccination side effects, but as always, talk to your doctor first.

To read the full CDC report, visit
[cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7008e3.htm?s_cid=mm7008e3_w](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7008e3.htm?s_cid=mm7008e3_w).

Local COVID-19 vaccine information: humboldt.gov/vaccineinfo
Humboldt County COVID-19 Data Dashboard: humboldt.gov/dashboard
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