

RAPHAEL B. STRICKER, MD
MELISSA C. FESLER, FNP-BC
UNION SQUARE MEDICAL ASSOCIATES
450 SUTTER STREET, SUITE 1504
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94108

415.399.1035 VOICE

415.399.1057 FACSIMILE

COVID-19 Vaccine

- What is COVID-19?
 - COVID-19 is a viral respiratory infection caused by a coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2. The virus has infected more than 300 million people around the world and killed more than five million. Common symptoms include fever, cough, loss of smell and/or taste, skin rashes, diarrhea and difficulty breathing. In some cases COVID-19 may lead to respiratory failure and death. There are now six vaccines that have been developed to prevent severe COVID-19. Three of these vaccines from Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson have been given to more than 250 million people in the USA. These experimental vaccines have undergone limited testing for safety and efficacy.

- Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine if I have Lyme disease?
 - There is much uncertainty about the short-term and long-term effects of the COVID-19 vaccines. Because of this uncertainty, it is difficult to give advice about the vaccines. Tick-borne disease patients are often taking long-term antibiotics, and there is evidence that these antibiotics are protective against severe COVID-19. In our currently active group of over 800 patients with tick-borne diseases, about two-thirds have received the COVID-19 vaccines and we have seen a handful of COVID-19 cases in both vaccinated and unvaccinated patients. Most patients were taking antibiotics, and some had mild flu-like symptoms. None of the patients taking antibiotics developed severe disease and none died.
 - Tick-borne disease patients who decide to get the COVID-19 vaccine do so at their own risk. It is possible that you might get a “Herx-like” reaction to the vaccine. Other vaccine-related complications include allergic reactions, blood clots, neurological problems, heart attacks and death. These complications occur in less than 1 in 30,000 people who receive the vaccine. You should continue taking your antibiotics if you get the vaccine.
 - It should be noted that both the World Health Organization (WHO) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that eligible patients should receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

- What if I get COVID-19?
 - Regardless of vaccine status if you develop symptoms of COVID-19, there are antibiotics, monoclonal antibodies and other medications that can lessen the impact of the viral infection. Consult our providers about these treatment options, which are only effective if taken early in the disease.
 - If you already had COVID-19, you probably do not need the vaccine. You should have SARS-CoV-2 antibody testing to find out if you are immune to the virus.
 - It is important to note that the COVID-19 vaccines may not protect you from getting infected with the virus or transmitting the virus. The vaccines should keep you from dying, just like appropriate antibiotic therapy will do.