



IMA Public Health Committee - October 15, 2021

IMA Public Health Committee Guidance

The bottom line until we have more data – (1) If you have not had COVID- and are unvaccinated, you and your family, friends and loved ones are at risk. Please get vaccinated as soon as possible. (2) if you previously had COVID, we cannot tell you how much or little protection you may have against getting COVID again, and whether getting the virus again might cause more severe disease, so please get at least one dose of vaccine.

The vaccine is safe and effective. As the Governor said, “Since the COVID-19 vaccine was made widely available to everyone in May, nearly all new COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths are among the unvaccinated.”

Natural Immunity vs. Vaccine-induced immunity

1. The IMA is committed to promoting the health and safety of Idahoans.
2. The science around COVID continues to evolve and the decisions regarding natural immunity (immunity from getting COVID) vs. vaccine immunity differ in what science is available to evaluate effectiveness.
3. There are conflicting data from studies looking at the strength and durability of natural immunity. These studies often involve only one vaccine, and any conclusions from these studies cannot be assumed to be the same for other COVID vaccines. These studies also have taken place in different countries at different times, where the virus variants (different types of COVID-19) may differ.
4. The fact that some people who have recovered from COVID appear to have strong immunity that lasts for many months is a very good thing. We do not want Idahoans to get COVID in the first place and risk the fate of nearly 700,000 Americans who have died from COVID. But we certainly are happy that it appears few will get COVID again, at least with the variants that we have encountered thus far.
5. Getting COVID and developing natural immunity is far more dangerous than getting vaccinated and developing vaccine-induced immunity.
6. COVID has caused many hospitalizations, deaths and in many cases long-term complications, such as so-called “long-COVID.” Long-COVID is when a person experiences ongoing symptoms that could last weeks or months after having COVID.

7. While some studies look back at populations of people who have had COVID and have seen evidence of strong immunity, it should be noted that natural immunity is unpredictable – some people develop more protection for a longer period of time than others. The problem is that we have no simple way as of today to identify people who have recovered from COVID that are likely to have strong immunity. The fact that someone may have a positive antibody test, does not necessarily mean that the person is protected from getting sick again, nor that any protection the person does have will protect against future versions of COVID.
8. Antibody tests are qualitative (positive or negative) and do not indicate the amount of immunity a person has.
9. Studies have looked at the natural immunity of people who, in most cases, had COVID with symptoms. We do not have enough data to determine whether those who previously had COVID without any symptoms or those who had a severe case of COVID, have strong and long-lasting immunity. There are reasons based upon our knowledge of immunology to believe that it could be different for these persons.
10. There is some decreasing immunity with people that had COVID. It is likely that this period of time is different for every person.
11. Some people who get COVID a second time can result in more severe disease than the first experience with COVID.
12. Even those who previously had COVID appear to benefit from at least a single dose of vaccine.
13. For those who had COVID, we do not know how long the protection will last and how effective it will be against future types of the disease.