



News Release

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Nebraska physician addresses concerns surrounding COVID-19 vaccines

For Immediate Release

(COLUMBUS, Neb.) – Dr. Kevin Reichmuth, a physician at Nebraska Pulmonary Specialties Lincoln, felt a sense of hope when vaccines for COVID-19 were approved.

“I was very happy. Like a lot of us, I think I felt a bit of optimism that hadn’t been felt for a while,” he said.

Reichmuth, who also does outreach care at Columbus Community Hospital, has lent his expertise in recent days to help to ease concerns about the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines. There have been arguments against the vaccines circulating on social media.

“Just because you read it on Twitter or Facebook or hear it from your neighbor down the street doesn’t mean it’s true. It is important to go to trusted sources for your information,” Reichmuth said.

He did his own research and evaluated data before he decided to be vaccinated.

“I felt extremely comfortable with the safety and efficacy of both vaccines to the point that it took away any reservations I had,” he said.

One of the main concerns about the vaccines is how quickly they were produced. Even though it took less than a year for the vaccines to be approved for use, Reichmuth said no corners were cut.

The development and distribution process was expedited to deliver 300 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines by January 2021. The vaccines were put through clinical trials to meet criteria for safety and effectiveness. Both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines are about 95% effective in preventing COVID-19.

Both vaccines require two doses several days apart. It is recommended that people who get both doses still wear a mask and practice social distancing.



“We are all tired of masks. But people have to continue to wear a mask for now,” Reichmuth said.

Neither vaccine is 100% effective, so someone who is vaccinated could still potentially get COVID-19 and spread it to others.

“Until we get a large enough percentage of the population vaccinated to reach that herd immunity ... we have to continue to do interventions to prevent the spread,” Reichmuth said.

Both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines are messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines, which help the body create antibodies to fight off infections. Studies show that mRNA degrades quickly once inside the body and never enters the nucleus of a cell. So the myth circulating on social media that the approved COVID-19 vaccines can change a person’s DNA is not true, Reichmuth said.

Reichmuth also said the vaccines present no risk to pregnant women or a fetus. Leaders in women’s health, including The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the Society of Maternal-Fetal Medicine, recommend women who are pregnant or breastfeeding get the vaccine when it is available to them.

However, in some cases, there are concerns about allergic reactions to the vaccines. Some people have experienced anaphylaxis after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But the risk for a severe allergic reaction is still rare.

Other reported side effects are mostly short-term and include soreness in the injection site, body aches, headaches and fever.

Reichmuth said those questioning whether they should get a COVID-19 vaccine should visit with their primary physician or go to another source of trusted, vetted information.

“Make your own decision, but don’t choose not to get vaccinated because of these myths,” he said.

“Our best chance of getting out of this pandemic is to get widespread vaccinations. Getting herd immunity by allowing infections to take place is not going to be a good idea. We are going to have over 500,000 American deaths as it is, even with the vaccines we have now. If we think we are going to get herd immunity by allowing widespread infection, we will have over a million deaths and untold amounts of morbidity.”

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