Cottage Health

July 2021: COVID Fact Check

Misinformation can put you at risk >> It is important to get the most current and accurate information from trusted health professionals, those who study and work to protect the health of others. We continue to learn about the virus that causes COVID-19 and the best ways to protect each other from the spread of disease. Please ask your doctor if you have questions about COVID-19, testing or vaccine.

What we know about **COVID-19 test safety**:

Misinformation is circulating online about one chemical used for sterilizing nasal swabs.

Ethylene oxide is used in many industries. It is used in healthcare to sterilize medical devices, including the swabs used in COVID-19 tests. ***Here are the facts we know:***

- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Food & Drug Administration (FDA) recognize both safe and unsafe uses for ethylene oxide (EtO).
- EtO is a gas at room temperature. It disperses in the air.
- EtO has been used for decades:
  - to make other chemicals in many household products like carpet, plastic and polyester.
  - to sterilize medical equipment that can't be exposed to heat or moisture.
- When medical equipment is exposed to EtO, it helps ensure the equipment is germ-free and safe for medical care.
- Equipment sterilization with EtO is usually done for a short time within tightly sealed, automated systems, and then items are removed.
- The gas does not linger on the items sterilized.
- With chronic or high-level exposure — if inhaled for prolonged periods or in large amounts — EtO has been shown to cause cancer in humans. This level of exposure does not occur with a COVID test.
- Any trace amount of EtO exposure from a COVID-19 testing swab is extremely brief and is not at the concentration and frequency shown to be hazardous.
- The risk in not getting a COVID-19 test when needed far outweighs the risk of any potential trace exposure to EtO.

More than **4 million people** have died from COVID.

COVID is easily spread from person to person through the air.
People can spread COVID before symptoms appear.
The COVID vaccine offers strong protection against severe illnes**s,** hospitalization and death.

>> **Getting the vaccine is an important decision. Weighing the risks can help in making the safest decision to protect yourself and those you love.**

What we know about COVID-19 vaccine safety:

- **More than a billion people in the world have been safely vaccinated.**
- Reports of severe complications after vaccination are less than one in a million.
- COVID vaccine has been shown to be highly effective in protecting people from severe illness and hospitalization due to COVID.
- The vaccine cannot give someone COVID and does not change a person's DNA.
- There is far more risk of getting seriously ill with COVID than there is risk of any serious side effect from the vaccine.

What we know about the Delta variant and vaccine protection:

- The Delta variant of COVID is highly contagious and is rapidly spreading in the US.
- The vast majority of COVID hospitalizations are among people who have not been fully vaccinated.
- While it's possible to get COVID after vaccination, the vaccine is highly effective in preventing severe illness and death.
- It is important to be fully vaccinated (2 doses of Pfizer or Moderna **or** 1 dose of Johnson & Johnson vaccine) for the best protection against COVID. People who received only a first dose of Pfizer or Moderna are urged to complete their second dose, even if it is beyond the 3–4 week recommended interval.

What we know about COVID-19 vaccine and pregnancy:

- Pregnant people — and recently pregnant people — have an increased risk of getting severely ill with COVID.
- Pregnant people have been safely vaccinated and delivered healthy babies.
- People have gotten pregnant after receiving the vaccine.
- People who are pregnant, wanting to become pregnant, and those who are lactating may receive the COVID vaccine.

What we know about COVID-19 and vaccine in children:

- Children can get COVID and spread it to others.
- The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends everyone 12 years and older get the COVID vaccination for protection.
- Children 12 years and older can get the Pfizer vaccine.
- Currently the best protection for children between 2 and 12 years old is to wear a mask in public and around people who don't live with them.

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