



FAQs: Johnson & Johnson Temporary Pause

Last updated April 15, 2021

This Tip Sheet was developed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) for local use. It will be posted at sfcdcp.org/vaccine.

AUDIENCE: General FAQ for all populations.

BACKGROUND: On 4/13/21, the CDC and FDA have recommended a temporary pause in the use of Johnson & Johnson vaccine out of an abundance of caution. Of over 6.8 million doses administered in the U.S., there have been six reported cases of a rare and severe type of blood clot.

San Francisco is following the FDA and CDC's recommendation and has directed health care providers to pause the use of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine until we receive direction from health and safety experts.

For more information about the side effects and what to do if you are experiencing symptoms, please contact your healthcare provider. We will provide additional details on what this means for our city's efforts as they become available.

Vaccines

Q: What if I already got the Johnson & Johnson vaccine? Is there anything I need to be worried about?

A: This blood clot side effect is very rare. There have been more than 6 million doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine given in the U.S. and only 6 reported cases. There have been 33,000 doses given in San Francisco and no reported cases.

It is important to note these symptoms are different from the common mild flu like symptoms many experience shortly after receiving a vaccination. If you received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine in the last 3 weeks and are experiencing severe headaches, abdominal pain, leg pain or shortness of breath please contact your health care provider or seek medical attention as soon as possible.

Q: I was vaccinated with the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Does this mean I need to get a different vaccine?

A: No. All approved COVID Vaccines -- including Johnson & Johnson -- have been shown to be overwhelmingly safe and effective at preventing COVID-19. Johnson & Johnson was 100% effective in preventing hospitalization and death, from COVID-19, 28 days after vaccination. There are no new doubts about how effective the vaccine is.

Q: If I had an appointment to receive the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, will my appointment be kept and their vaccine be replaced with Moderna or Pfizer? Should I wait?

A: All SFDPH vaccine events and locations will offer an alternate vaccine choice to those previously scheduled for Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Note that the other choices require two shots instead of one, as with the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Unfortunately, there is no other one dose vaccine.

Most other vaccine providers will also be able to provide this alternate, 2-dose vaccine choice. Please contact your vaccine provider for more information.

The longer you wait to get vaccinated, the greater the risk of contracting COVID-19. The risk of dying from COVID is still very real.

General Info

Q: When and how was California notified of the issue?

A: California received notification from the CDC and FDA on 4/13/ 21.

Q: How many people have already received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine?

A: 898,000 doses of Johnson & Johnson have been administered in California. 33,000 doses have been administered in San Francisco.

Q: Will California stop using the Johnson & Johnson vaccine?

A: In accordance with our federal partners, and out of an abundance of caution, California will pause the use of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine as they continue to review data about the 6 reported U.S. cases of blood clotting.

Q: How does this affect California's plans to open vaccinations to all individuals 16 and over on April 15?

A: This will not impact California's ability to open vaccine eligibility to all individuals 16 and over as we have sufficient supply of Moderna and Pfizer vaccines. J&J accounts for only 4% of our vaccine supply.

Q: How does this affect our trajectory to fully reopening on June 15?

A: California remains on target to fully reopen on June 15 as we have sufficient supply of Modern and Pfizer vaccines. J&J accounts for only 4% of our vaccine supply, which is why we don't believe this will impact our vaccine distribution or our June 15 reopening goal.

Q: Will you move forward with reopening the economy if we don't continue vaccinating Californians at the rate we've seen to date?

A: California remains on target to fully reopen on June 15 as we have sufficient supply of Modern and Pfizer vaccines. All Californians are encouraged to get vaccinated - vaccines are safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus.