



National Muslim Task Force on COVID-19 and National Black Muslim COVID Coalition Statement Regarding COVID-19 Vaccines

December 21, 2020

Summary

The National Muslim Task Force on COVID-19 and the National Black Muslim COVID Coalition (i.e., Taskforce and Coalition) recognize the need for guidance to help the American Muslim community make informed decisions about the new COVID-19 vaccines. **This joint recommendation is based on consultations with public health experts and religious leaders.**

The Task Force and Coalition recommend:

1. Taking COVID-19 vaccines as directed by your physician or healthcare provider based on your risk and local public health authority guidance
2. Maintaining all other preventive health actions including wearing masks, social distancing and wash hands

Background

Vaccines, in general, save lives by protecting against the spread of disease and reducing the severity of disease should one get infected. Some of the most devastating diseases that affect children and adults have been greatly reduced or eradicated completely thanks to vaccines; for example, polio, diphtheria, smallpox. Vaccines have kept children and adults healthy and have saved millions of lives for more than 50 years. Most vaccines are 90% to 99% effective in preventing disease.

All vaccines in the US get tested by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) before they are marketed. The FDA's task is to ensure safety and efficacy of the vaccine and grant full approval or emergency authorization based on data in hand. These data get reviewed again by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as other regulatory groups before recommendations about vaccination are made.

The FDA also monitors where and how vaccines are made. The places where vaccines are made must be licensed. They are regularly inspected and each vaccine lot is safety-tested.¹ To make sure the vaccine continues to be safe, the FDA and the CDC created the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). All doctors must report serious side effects of vaccines to VAERS so they can be studied. Parents can also file reports with VAERS. For more information about VAERS, visit www.vaers.hhs.gov or call the toll-free VAERS information line at 800/822-7967.²

COVID-19 Vaccines

¹ Food and Drug Administration - www.fda.gov

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - www.cdc.gov/vaccines

Due to the advancement of technology and years of research on how vaccines can work, we have several COVID vaccines in clinical trials. Guidelines for the phases of these clinical trials have been followed and strict safety and efficacy testing has been maintained and is being reviewed by independent regulatory boards. These vaccines have been developed and monitored in clinical trials and two vaccines (made by Pfizer and Moderna) have sought EUA (emergency use authorization) by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other medical organizations. At the time this statement was created, there are three vaccines for COVID-19 in phase 3 clinical trials, two of which have shown more than 90% effectiveness in preventing symptomatic COVID-19 infection if they get two doses of the vaccine. However, there is no data just yet if the vaccines prevent spread of the infection to other people. **The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have received FDA and CDC approval for Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) in patients 16 years and older.** *If you are pregnant, please talk with your healthcare provider since we don't have enough information yet from the vaccine trials about pregnant patients.

***The novel mRNA Approach*³ to vaccine development:**

Both Pfizer and Moderna use an mRNA approach to create the vaccine. This approach teaches “our cells how to make a protein—or even just a piece of a protein—that triggers an immune response inside our bodies. That immune response, which produces antibodies, is what protects us from getting infected if the real virus enters our bodies.”⁴ This type of vaccine does not lead to future genetic changes in the vaccinated person. Additionally, there is no virus in the mRNA vaccine candidates, which means you cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine.

With respect to ingredients: the two vaccines contain fat, salts/buffer agents, and sugar (sucrose). The fat is not made from pork products.

With respect to side effects: patients followed out to 2 months have reported fatigue, fever, headache and redness at the site of the injection, but side effects did not last long, and it was rare for side effects to be serious. There are recent reports of patients having anaphylactoid reactions, which means patients had shortness of breath but did not actually have a severe allergic response like anaphylaxis.

Islam, Vaccines and Health

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines do NOT contain porcine products. They do NOT contain stem cell products or dead fetal remains. According to the American Muslim Jurists of North America (AMJA): “The COVID-19 vaccines produced by Pfizer and Moderna, which will be soon available, do not rely on such technologies, and thus, there is no reason to doubt their permissibility because of this concern.”⁵

On the other hand there have been religious concerns about the ethical use of stem cells which led to the creation of some COVID vaccines, specifically cells from abortion-derived cell lines. **These types of cell lines were not used to make these two COVID vaccines.**⁶

³ Pardi N, Hogan MJ, Weissman D. Recent advances in mRNA vaccine technology. *Curr Opin Immunol.* 2020 Mar 31;65:14-20. doi: 10.1016/j.coi.2020.01.008. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 32244193.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/mrna.html>

⁵ AMJA Resident Fatwa Committee. 2020 Dec 13; <https://www.amjaonline.org/fatwa/en/87763/the-ruling-on-getting-the-covid-19-coronavirus-vaccine>

⁶ Charlotte Lozier Institute. <https://s27589.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/COVID-19-Vaccine-Candidates-and-Abortion-Derived-Cell-Lines.pdf>

Islamic ethical/legal principles as they apply to medicine privilege the preservation of life based on the verse of the Qur'an: "... *Whoever saves a human life, it would be as if he saved the entire mankind ...*" (Chapter 5: Verse 35), and on the accepted classical *Maqasid al-Shariah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law) which consider the protection and preservation of life, intellect, property, progeny, and religion as the cardinal values of Islamic morality. Additionally, Muslims are permitted or encouraged to seek treatment for disease based on Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)'s statement: "*Seek treatment for your illness as God has not created an illness for which He did not create a treatment except old age or senility*".

Keeping the above moral guidelines on top of mind, we must make informed choices about the benefit and risk from vaccination. At present our view is that the potential benefits outweigh harms, and there are few religious objections to the vaccination. We recognize that there are ongoing studies on the COVID-19 vaccines as to safety and efficacy, and we will continue to keep our communities updated as we receive more information. We also recognize that there is not enough data on the effectiveness of the vaccine among minority communities and certain populations.

Conclusion

The Taskforce and Coalition recommend individuals obtain the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines after discussing with your physician or healthcare provider and in-line with your local public health guidance. The Taskforce and Coalition recommend healthcare providers engage with minority communities to address valid concerns from patients about the vaccine. We recommend equitable distribution of the vaccines to all communities, especially those most hard-hit by the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to more infections and death in minority communities compared to the general populations. The Taskforce and Coalition acknowledge the long history of healthcare inequity because of systemic racism, and also poor representation of minority groups in clinical trials. We understand that some communities distrust the system and have legitimate concerns over vaccines and vaccination protocols. So we recommend healthcare providers engage with minority communities, racial, religious, and otherwise to address these concerns as the pandemic rages on.

Respectfully,
National Task Force on Covid-19
National Black Muslim Covid Coalition

Signatories

American Muslim Community Foundation (AMCF)
American Muslim Health Professionals (AMHP)
Association of Muslim Chaplains (AMC)
Fiqh Council of North America (FCNA)
Initiative on Islam and Medicine
Islamic Medical Association of North America (IMANA)
Islamic Relief USA (IRUSA)
Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)
Khalil Center
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Penny Appeal USA
The Mosque Cares
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