Frequently Asked Questions: Johnson and Johnson Pause

Should I still get vaccinated?

Yes! The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines remain in use and are highly effective in reducing the risk of COVID infection. Community transmission in Baltimore remains high, so residents should not delay in seeking out vaccination even during the pause.

What are the issues that have been reported with the Johnson and Johnson vaccine?

Cerebral Venous Sinus Thrombosis (CVST), or blood clots, and thrombocytopenia, or low platelet counts, have been reported in 6 women between the ages of 18-48 years old, up to 3 weeks after receiving the Johnson and Johnson vaccine.

How many are affected?

The FDA and CDC reported 6 cases of blood clots and low blood platelet count out of 6.8 million doses of J+J vaccine administered in the U.S.

How many J+J vaccines have been administered in the City so far?

As of the morning of 4/13, 10,530 Baltimore City residents have been vaccinated with the Johnson and Johnson vaccine, making up approx. **5%** of the total number of first or single-dose vaccinations in the city (184,906 total first dose vaccinations given as of 4/13/21).

All of the information we have about vaccination demographics can be found on our online dashboard at **coronavirus.baltimorecity.gov/covax**

What do we need to do if you received the J+J vaccine?

The vast majority of individuals have **not** experienced negative side effects from Johnson and Johnson vaccine and do not need to do anything. If you have received the vaccine within the past 3 weeks and develop a *severe headache, abdominal pain, leg pain, or shortness of breath*, **immediately** contact your healthcare provider. The risk is thought to be low if you received the vaccine a month or more ago.

How will this affect Baltimore City's vaccine operations?

Following the guidance of the FDA and CDC, the Baltimore City Health Department has paused the use of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, while the federal agencies take a closer look at data. While no appointment cancellations have been required, we are currently assessing our long-term vaccination plans

for the summer that involve using Johnson and Johnson vaccine while we await further information from the CDC and the FDA.

Why the pause?

The FDA and the CDC are evaluating safety information for the Johnson and Johnson vaccine in light of blood clots and low platelet counts reported in 6 women between the ages of 18 and 48. This is to ensure that the vaccines being administered are safe and effective and that this is happening in a transparent manner.

How long will this pause take?

The FDA and CDC will provide information on timeline as applicable.

What steps are the government taking to evaluate the safety of this vaccine?

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices or ACIP develops recommendations on how to use vaccines to control disease in the United States. They are holding an emergency public meeting on Wednesday, April 14th, from 1 pm-430pm, to review the data and go over the recent cases of blood clots and low platelet counts, to assess if there will be any changes regarding recommended usage of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine.

Is this normal? Should we be concerned?

From what we know now, an extremely small percentage of individuals experienced blood clots and low platelet counts, after taking the vaccine. The FDA and the CDC are making sure that we have as much information as possible about all of the vaccines, and may make recommendations about whether a certain population should or should not take the vaccine if there are any medications that you should not take while receiving the vaccine, or other potential factors to consider. For now, while we have paused the use of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine, residents should still get vaccinated where they can, and those who have already received the Johnson and Johnson vaccine should just make sure to monitor themselves for severe headaches, abdominal pain, leg pain, or shortness of breath, especially within 3 weeks of receiving the J and J vaccine. In the unlikely situation that these symptoms occur, those individuals should reach out to their primary care provider **immediately**, and let them know of what they're experiencing.

Official Statement, issued 4/13 to press

"This morning, the Centers for Disease Control and the Federal Drug Administration recommended a pause in the use of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine, to look into the possibility of blood clots forming in an extremely small number of younger patients. Accordingly, the Baltimore City Health Department is pausing the use of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine until we receive further information from our federal and state partners.

This pause will not significantly impact our local vaccination operations. The Baltimore City Health Department is utilizing the Moderna vaccine at our Baltimore City Community College vaccination clinic, as well as at our mobile vaccination clinics. We will continue to provide the Moderna vaccines to residents, as we await more details regarding the Johnson and Johnson vaccine. To date, the Baltimore City Health Department has received 1400 doses of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine, making up approximately 3% of our first dose vaccination supply.

While the number of individuals who have reported experiencing blood clots remains small, people who have received the Johnson and Johnson vaccine, who develop a severe headache, abdominal pain, leg pain, or shortness of breath within three weeks after vaccination should immediately contact their health care provider."

Addendum Sent to Medical Providers 4/13/21

- There have been 6 reported cases of blood clots (cerebral venous sinus thrombosis) and low platelet counts (thrombocytopenia) in women 18 - 48 years old after receiving the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.
- Close to 7 million doses of Johnson & Johnson vaccine have been administered to date and these cases are extremely rare.
- If you have received the vaccine within the past 3 weeks and develop severe headache, abdominal pain, leg pain or shortness of breath immediately contact your healthcare provider. Please let the healthcare provider know that you received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.
- The risk is thought to be low if you received the vaccine a month or more ago.
- At this time, we do not know if certain populations are at increased risk. This is rapidly evolving and CDC and FDA are investigating these rare cases and evaluating their significance.