# Your questions, answered

--Ben Guarino & Angela Fritz, Washington Post, 2021-03-23

We're seeing a high volume of questions this week around infections after vaccination and myths or misconceptions about the vaccines, so today we're briefly answering five at once.

***"I need clarity on what the vaccine means; there is such mixed information out there. Does the vaccine prevent you from getting the disease or strictly lessen the effects if you do get it?"*** *—Monica in Virginia*

The vaccine trials only tested for whether the vaccine could prevent symptoms. So we know that they prevent hospitalization and death, but researchers are still working to gather data on how well the vaccines prevent illness all together. There is early evidence that they do significantly reduce the likelihood that you would be infected at all. Several additional studies are in progress.

***"Is there any data on people who have been vaccinated and became asymptomatic carriers?"*** *—Walt in Colorado*

Yes — brand-spanking-new data that was just published today in the New England Journal of Medicine. Out of 28,184 California health-care workers who received a second dose, only seven tested positive 15 days or more after their second dose. The authors concluded it was a 0.05 percent positivity rate for those who were fully vaccinated, within their sample. That's a very promising result.

***"If a person who has been vaccinated still contracts the virus, I understand that they should not get seriously ill. But is it possible that they could be a 'long-hauler' and end up dealing with ongoing problems such as headaches, fatigue, lung or heart problems, etc.?"*** *— Patrice in Michigan*

There are no study results we can point to yet, but we're hearing from experts that getting vaccinated will probably reduce your chances of contracting long-haul covid-19.

Akiko Iwasaki, an immunologist at Yale University, told The Post that immunization is likely to reduce the chances of long-term covid-19, simply because vaccines help prevent the disease. Long-haul covid-19 is already very rare. Reducing the overall number of infections will likely make it even more rare.

***"My sister, who is declining to be vaccinated, claimed to me a few days ago that nearly 1,000 people who have been vaccinated have died as a result of the vaccine, including a friend in South Carolina who died the same day. What is accurate?"*** *— Vickie in Georgia*

The vaccine has resulted in zero deaths, according to the CDC. Some people have died after getting the coronavirus vaccine — unfortunately, many people die in the United States each day whether they have been vaccinated — but those deaths weren't caused by the vaccine. "A review of available clinical information including death certificates, autopsy, and medical records revealed no evidence that vaccination contributed to patient deaths," the CDC reports.

***"If my parents had covid with symptoms in November, is it okay for them to have both shots of the Pfizer vaccine? They already had the first dose. I read an article about someone who died after the second dose, probably because she already had antibodies and her organs failed. Could this be true? Now I am worried for my parents."*** *— Dana in Virginia*

They should definitely get both doses. Going back to the answer above, there are no deaths associated with getting vaccinated, and the CDC says everyone — including people who had a previous infection — should get their shots.

Beware of headlines that link someone's death back to the vaccine without any evidence they were related. Merely saying "she died four days after getting the second shot" is not evidence, but some websites prey on readers' fears. Those headlines often go viral on Facebook. Look for well-sourced information, particularly from the CDC or other health officials. (Mistakes do happen at news organizations. When The Post gets something wrong, we always issue a prominent correction.)