I’m Vax’d... Great! ... Now What?

March 10, 2021 By Shawn Decker

On Monday afternoon I got the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine. We drove about two hours to get it, because information in Charlottesville (where I live) was slow to come by in terms of when I’d have the opportunity to get vaccinated. It may be because there are so many healthcare workers, since our community hosts two hospitals- the University of Virginia and Martha Jefferson, respectively. I have relied on both at times, and feel lucky to have access to such great healthcare.

I’m also totally okay with healthcare workers being the priority in terms of who receives vaccinations. And, of course, yesterday I received an email from the HIV clinic at UVA that people with HIV can sign up for their vaccines now. Which I’m also totally okay with since I’m lucky to be able to drive the two hours to get mine on Monday.

I got my vaccine at Shenandoah University in Winchester. The healthcare team was set up on the indoor track field, and there were huge golf carts that transported patients from the parking lot to the front doors, and then again from the back of the facility. It was a nice day and my problematic ankle was behaving, so I opted for the walk in anticipation of the reaction to the vaccine, which was likely going to keep me from my daily walk around my neighborhood.

Literally four minutes after walking in, I was receiving the injection. Gwenn, my lovely partner, was waiting in the car. When I texted her, she had barely gotten her iPhone entertainment in order. I was surprised, too, since I had been directed to three different set-ups, each with no waiting around whatsoever. The only wait was the 15 minutes of post-vax observation, just to make sure there were not any immediate adverse reactions to the vaccine. A giant clock, likely used to measure how fast those college kids can run a lap, was on display and the wait was an honor code of sorts.

It felt like the perfect place to host the proceedings, and it was easy to respect the 6-foot social distancing recommendations. Everyone there was quite friendly, and I got a few chuckles for my fashion choice, a t-shirt that read “THE ANTIBODIES”, who are a great band you should look up if you like fun pop tunes. (I can’t recommend their love letter to The Monster Squad movie enough.)

About ten hours or so I started to feel the first hints of a low-grade fever. You know, the “am I hot or am I cold?” internal query and subsequent removal and return of layers of clothing. Even though it was close to bedtime, the symptoms weren’t drastic enough for me to take ibuprofen. The recommendation is to wait 6 hours to take it, but I figured I’d take it the next day if I needed

to.

I needed to.

Fortunately, I only had a 2-degree-above-my-normal temperature. My rationale after a less-than-restful night of sleep was that, by the time the ibuprofen wore off, I'd be in the clear in terms of feeling the after-effects of my body's response to the vaccination. And I was right!

It's funny, when I took my temperature the first time and it was slightly elevated, I was happy. Because that meant my body was doing what it's supposed to do. I understand that there may be more variants coming, and that at some point I may need to get another shot or some kind of "booster". And I'm okay with that. My ultimate goal is to do everything in my power to prevent contracting COVID-19, and this week I took a major step forward.

Truth be told, I don't think I'll ever look at a crowded room the same again. In my life, I'm sure I've contracted countless colds and other ailments from the basic human interactions we all engage in. When everything from travel to concerts to Twister tournaments is officially declared safe I am sure there will be some caveats. This entire pandemic is a moving target that isn't going anywhere anytime soon, and we'll all have to gauge what we are comfortable doing.

The one thing we shouldn't fear, however, is getting the vaccine.

Positively Yours,
Shawn

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