

Essential Worker Health Survey Newsletter

Vol. 6 | December 20, 2021

From strengthening workplace protections

to ensuring our members have **access to life-saving vaccinations**, the UFCW has been standing with our essential workers from day one. And as we get closer to understanding and overcoming COVID-19, it is critical that **our essential working members remain a priority**.

That is why **UFCW** has partnered with the **University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC)** and **FORWARD Databank** to launch a historic, national **Essential Worker Health Survey**.

Every month, participants of this groundbreaking study will receive text messages that include **short surveys**, opportunities to provide **feedback** on workplace conditions, and access to **curated newsletters** with the opportunity to submit and have their specific **COVID or vaccine questions** answered by leading medical experts.

To join the study, text 'EssentialWorker' to 83071.

Key Survey Findings

Top Reasons Why UFCW Members Got Vaccinated



60%

Information on COVID-19 vaccines in news stories



31%

Consultation with doctor



28%

Friend/family member receiving vaccine



20%

Friend/family member being diagnosed with COVID-19

Stat #1

Key Survey Findings – Continued

Stat #2



Percentage of Respondents Who Received a Vaccine Booster Shot



September

2%



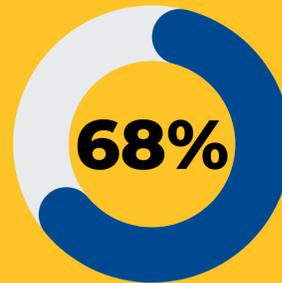
October

9%



November

27%



Percentage of survey respondents who plan or have gotten a flu shot this fall.

Stat #3



Dr. Alison Freifeld, MD

Professor, Department of Internal Medicine for the University of Nebraska and Director, Section of Oncology Infectious Diseases for Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center

Question: I can't keep up with all the variants I'm hearing about in the news. I'm already vaccinated so am I still safe?

Dr. Alison: Yes, there are lots of variants of the SARS CoV-2 virus (which causes COVID-19 illness) being identified and it can be hard to keep up! Viruses are constantly changing through genetic mutations that occur when they reproduce in people. As long as there is community transmission of the virus, mutations will occur. Sometimes these mutations result in a new variant of the virus that may be more transmissible or cause a more severe illness, while other variants can quickly disappear.

The available vaccines are successful in protecting against severe illness, hospitalization, and death for a variety of virus strains. They have been proven successful against the current dominant virus in the US, the delta variant, and are expected to be effective against the new omicron variant.

No vaccine is 100% protective and breakthrough COVID-19

Ask. Dr. Alison

Have questions about COVID-19 or any of the vaccines? We've reached out to one of the nation's leading infectious diseases experts to address your concerns.

occur but they are much less common, less severe and have much lower fatality rates than among unvaccinated people. The CDC will continue to work with other public health organizations to monitor potential new variants around the globe.

Question: My state no longer requires masks indoors, but others still do. Why are they different and is it really safe to stop wearing masks?

Dr. Alison: Wearing a mask is one of several proven life-saving measures, including physical distancing, appropriate ventilation, vaccination, and timely testing for COVID-19. Dropping a mask requirement in a particular region may make it easier to go out, but it does not mean that it's a safe thing to do.

There is still a **federal requirement** to wear a mask on public transportation traveling into, within, or out of the United States. This also applies to U.S. transportation hubs such as airports and train stations.

With the reports that high transmission variants (delta, omicron) are driving a spike in infections across the country, we strongly recommend that masks be worn by everyone (including kids 5 years and older, and over 2 years of age if they can manage it) in indoor public places, if they meet the following conditions:

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— Dr. Alison Freifeld, MD

- are not fully vaccinated and/or have not received a booster shot;
- have a weakened immune system or are high risk for severe COVID-19 (older, have an underlying chronic illness, overweight); or
- are vaccinated but live or work in an area of high transmission (which is nearly everywhere in the United States right now).

Question: I have an autoimmune disease is the shot safe for me?

Dr. Alison: Since autoimmune diseases are the result of an immune system being improperly regulated, it's reasonable to worry that a COVID-19 vaccine might often make things worse. Fortunately, that has not been the case.

The American College of Rheumatology recommends getting vaccinated if you have an autoim-

Ask. Dr. Alison — Continued

mune disease because it is much safer than becoming infected with the COVID-19 virus. Patients with autoimmune disease face higher rates of severe COVID-19 disease and death compared with the general population. This may be due to the underlying disease or to immunosuppressive medications need to treat it.

In a recent study of nearly 1400 patients with chronic rheumatologic and musculoskeletal diseases, the

vast majority tolerated the mRNA vaccines (by Pfizer and Moderna) very well. About 11% reported a mild or moderate flare of underlying disease within a week after a vaccine injection and no severe flares were reported.

It's important to be aware that some people who are taking strong immunosuppressive medicines for autoimmune diseases may not develop very strong protection from the COVID-19

vaccines. It is always best to discuss your personal health status with your doctor to determine the timing and type of vaccination that is right for you.

—EWHSN

The answers provided above include the best information known at the time of publishing.

***To Ask Dr. Alison your COVID or vaccine question, text
'AskDrAlison' to 83071
for survey participants only***

**Learn more about the Essential Worker Health Survey at:
ufcw.org/EssentialWorkerStudy**