



For Immediate Release

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Your Partner in Health: **What Is It About These Vaccines?**

By Mohamed “Moe” Jalloh, PharmD

Vaccines are one of our greatest medical success stories. For centuries, humans explored ways to protect against deadly diseases that would eliminate entire villages as early as 10,000 BC. Fast forward 12,000 years to Dr. Edward Jenner, an English physicist and scientist, who made a stunning observation that led to their development.

Vaccines work by tricking our immune system into building a defense against a foreign virus or bacteria after being given a “faux picture” of the full virus/bacteria or part of it. The new mRNA vaccines serve as recipes to allow your body to print your own copy for defense. Vaccines have nearly eliminated diseases such as polio, measles, and rubella. This is due to herd immunity, where the majority of a community receives a vaccine, therefore preventing the virus or bacteria from spreading from person to person.

To keep you and your family protected from harmful viruses and bacteria, below are answers to common vaccine questions. For more information on vaccines, please visit the [Partnership HealthPlan of California immunization page](#) and talk with your doctor about the vaccine schedule to keep you and your family healthy.

Are vaccines safe?

Yes. Vaccines are very safe. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has one of the strictest standards for approving vaccines in the world. For every approved drug, there are hundreds that have failed development or were rejected. Also, all vaccines must undergo various studies to validate that they are safe and effective.

Didn't the FDA skip steps to approve the various COVID-19 vaccines?

No. When the FDA approved the COVID-19 vaccines, they streamlined various regulatory procedures and allowed certain studies to occur back-to-back to speed up the process.

Previously, it would take years before the FDA would even review submitted clinical study data. However, during the pandemic, they were reviewing the COVID-19 vaccine study data as soon as it was received. As a comparison, it took years before we got the first iPhone; now we have the process so streamlined that we get a new one at least every other year.

Can certain vaccines mess with your DNA?

No, mRNA vaccines do not go near the cells where our DNA is kept. Our bodies quickly get rid of the mRNA within 48 hours of injection. Our bodies already use mRNA to make various proteins, and mRNA vaccines take advantage of this.

Can vaccines give me the disease they are protecting against?

Yes and no. Most vaccines are synthetic copies of parts of viruses or bacteria that trick our body to make a defense. There are certain vaccines that actually do have weakened versions of the actual virus. For most people, this weak version allows your body to easily build a defense against it. However, if your immune system is already weak, this could cause a problem. Speak to your physician and pharmacist to learn which vaccines you are receiving.

Is there a link between vaccines and autism?

No. There is no link between vaccines and autism. Scientific studies have validated that vaccines do not cause autism.

About the author: *Mohamed Jalloh is a board-certified clinical pharmacist and the director of health equity at Partnership HealthPlan of California, a Medi-Cal managed care plan with more than 900,000 members in 24 Northern California counties. He is a part-time assistant professor of clinical sciences at Touro University California and guest lecturer at Stanford University. He is also the author of the children's book "Andre's Armor: A Fun and Easy Way to Learn How Vaccines Work!"*

About Partnership HealthPlan of California: Partnership is a community-based, safety-net health care organization that contracts with the state to administer Medi-Cal benefits. Partnership provides quality care to over 900,000 Medi-Cal members. Starting in Solano County in 1994, Partnership now serves 24 Northern California counties – Butte, Colusa, Del Norte, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Lassen, Marin, Mendocino, Modoc, Napa, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Solano, Sonoma, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, Yolo, and Yuba. Learn more about Partnership at PartnershipHP.org.

About Your Partner in Health: Partnership will be sharing quarterly articles on important health topics with media outlets in our service area to help our members and communities be healthy.