

Managing anxiety about the COVID-19 vaccine

As the new COVID-19 vaccine is being administered across the country, many people are feeling a mix of emotions. There is hope that the vaccine will normalize life and relief that the vaccine will save lives. There is also anxiety about its potential side effects, long-term effectiveness and availability. For some, the stress and uncertainty caused by the pandemic are being exacerbated by vaccine concerns.

Vaccine safety

Although the two vaccines currently available were rapidly developed, they meet the safety and efficacy standards of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The data from the manufacturers and research from large clinical trials show that the benefits of the vaccines outweigh the risks of side effects and coronavirus infection. There are also other COVID-19 vaccines in development that must meet stringent safety standards before they can be released.

In addition, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and FDA have expanded safety monitoring systems to continue to track possible side effects of vaccines. A new easy-to-use, smartphone-based tool called V-safe enables vaccinated individuals to notify the CDC about any side effects. V-safe also texts reminders to get the second vaccine dose.

Anxiety about the vaccine

Anxiety can stem from fears about the vaccine's safety, getting a shot or not having control over when it will be available. Here are tips to help manage it:

Stay informed and research credible sources. There is a lot of misinformation online about vaccinations in general. Follow credible news and information sources. Up-to-date information about the COVID-19 vaccines, side effects and benefits, and answers to frequently asked questions, are available on the CDC website.

Follow recommended guidelines to keep yourself safe. It will take time for the vaccine to be available to anyone who wants it. In the meantime, take precautions to protect yourself and your family by wearing masks, social distancing and washing your hands. Minimize your risk of contracting the virus by following CDC guidelines on travel, gatherings and other virus-spreading activities.

Make self-care a priority and consistently practice ways to cope with stress. Anxiety can result from a feeling of lack of control and uncertainty, and the pandemic was the perfect storm of both. Get enough sleep, eat nutritious foods, exercise and take time every day for an activity you enjoy.

Finally, remember that feelings of stress and anxiety during difficult times are normal and will pass. If you find that anxiety continually affects your quality of life and you feel overwhelmed, consider talking to a mental health professional.

Help is available. Your program is confidential and here to help you and your household members 24/7/365. No situation is too big or too small. Give us a call or visit your program website to get started.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention