



COVID-19 and Cancer Updates
COVID-19 Pandemic Education
First Quarter 2021 Panel

What Patients Should Expect Post COVID-19 Vaccination

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- Dr. Jack West: Hi, I'm Dr. Jack West and I'm a medical oncologist, an associate clinical professor with a focus on thoracic oncology, working at the City of hope Comprehensive Cancer Center in the Los Angeles area. And I'm happy to be joined today by two of my colleagues who are also on the board of directors for GRACE, Global Resource for Advancing Cancer Education. I serve as the founder and president, but I'd like to welcome two of my colleagues to introduce themselves. If you can, maybe I can start with you, Jared, if you can.
- Dr. Jared Weiss: Sure. I'm Jared Weiss, I'm also a thoracic oncologist at University of North Carolina,
- Dr. Benjamin Levy: Yeah, Ben Levy. I'm a thoracic medical oncologist at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, and primarily based out of Washington DC.
- Dr. Jack West: Great. So, let's turn to the other as maybe the evil twin of, of vaccines are rolling out. The numbers are going down in a favorable. And that is, we are now experiencing a lot of variability and extremely mixed messages about how to open up whether it's safe to open all sorts of things. And including a lot of quibbling amongst ourselves, in respect to



thoughtful people about whether we should change our behavior once you've been vaccinated, is it safe to go without a mask or, you know, congregate with other people who are vaccinated and you know, how vigilant do we need to be? Do you have personal recommendations or institutional professional ones? Because I would say, especially in a world where we're getting news, that, you know, a state here and a County there is relaxing their policies and you can now dine in doors and all of this. I think we're going to, we have a lot of uncertainty, both about what to do and what's going to happen.

Dr. Benjamin Levy: Yeah, I think you know, this is such a fluid situation. I think they're going to be more recommendations coming out soon about what patients post vaccination should expect, and how they should behave. You know, I try to keep my recommendations very broad. We get a lot of questions about this. Not that a lot of our patients are vaccinated. The biggest question I get is can I go see my grandkids or can I see my kids? And you got to ask about this situation and the scenario and whether you, and I think it is a judgment call. I think, you know, I always tell patients the safest thing is if your family is not vaccinated, even if you are, you're not at an absolute zero risk. I don't tell them this is where may have some differences. I don't tell them not to travel. I just say, look, this is a risk assessment for you that you have to make a decision.

And I can't tell you that you're not out of the woods. Even if you are vaccinated, we don't, we have some data that's been generated now to suggest that it may be safe, but I use the risk assessment model when patients are asking me whether I should see my kids or not, or I've got all my friends are vaccinated and they want to come have a, you know, a bridge game or whatever. You know, I say it's a risk assessment. The odds are that there's very little likelihood that there will be any consequence out of this clinically or medically, but you're not a hundred percent. And I continue to tell them the mask. I continue to tell them to social distance, until a large majority of our population gets vaccinated. Hopefully that will happen in the next three to six months, but that's my approach. And I don't know if that's right or wrong, but I use the risk assessment approach. I don't say yay or nay. I say, you know, this is [inaudible].

Dr. Jack West: I think it's appropriate for us to acknowledge when we don't know, and we have to rely on judgment. And again, it is discomfoting to everyone. We want some certainty. Patients want to be able to ask and get a clear answer, but we also have to be honest and saying, we don't know. I think that another issue is there's the variable of you know, time of how long the vaccine works. We don't know that as well. And a lot of the recommendations that I've seen as infographics on social media say, okay, well, within three months of your vaccine, well, a lot of us got vaccinated pretty close to three months ago, so these are all pretty close to data free zones right now with a thousand different variables. I don't know what you're saying, Jared. I think at the end of the day, maybe the best answer is to acknowledge what we don't know, and leave it up to judgment, but not be a foolhardy, but also not be extremely rigid indefinitely when we don't know if that's justified.



Dr. Jared Weiss:

My conversation is a lot like Ben's with patients along the lines of what's worth it and what's not. So, you know, if you're vaccinated, is it really that valuable to you to walk down the street maskless? Or when you congregate with other vaccinated people, to not wear a mask? I'm going to make the argument and maybe I'm overstepping bounds here that wearing a mask, isn't that big of a deal. And if it can save your or someone else's life where the bleeping mask, right? It's not a high cost. Now, when you talk about other things like, can I see my grandchildren? I haven't seen my grandchildren in a year, right? I've been perfect about this. I haven't left my home. You know, that's a major quality of life issue. And as we advise caution, and I know all three of us throughout this I've advised caution, we can't do what the opposition has done, which is to say, be agents of just truth and favor of what we believe, right. Our data does argue, as Ben said, there was some hints that vaccines actually do help prevent spread, right?

There's a lot on social media from people advocating caution in the way we are saying that they don't actually the data argues, if anything that they do. And so I think it's what's worth it, right? So if you haven't seen your grandchildren in a year and that's a major quality of life issue, go see your grandchildren. But when you go, is it really worth it to be indoors versus outdoors as it's warming up? Or could you pick a warm day and see them on your screened in porch or outdoor in somebody's yard? I would argue, go see them, but take the precaution of being outdoors. And if you're going to go see them, is it a big deal to ask your grandkids to wear a mask? I have a two year old, she loves her donut mask. Her big sister's wear a mask. She wants to wear a mask. Young children can wear a mask. It's a very cute mask, but you know, it's not a big deal wearing a mask. If it's just the expectation, this is what we do. As a family, then children will wear a mask. Everyone can wear a mask, and now you're doing what you want to do, but you're doing it in the safest possible way. And that's the kind of message that I'm giving as. Look, it's a values-based decision, but once you choose to do it, enact whatever precautions you can to make this smart.