



Association of
Immunization
Managers



Public Talking Points

A rare nervous system condition known as Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) has been found in a small number of people after receiving the J & J (Johnson & Johnson) vaccine.

- GBS is extremely rare. Only 100 cases have been reported among the more than 12.8 million doses administered of the J & J vaccine.
- GBS has numerous potential causes, including infections resulting from germs in the body like bacteria, and viruses such as the flu or COVID-19.
- GBS causes your body to become increasingly weak over time. The majority of GBS patients get better. A few become paralyzed. Some may die.
- GBS is usually seen in adults over the age of 50, and it is most common in men.

Vaccine safety is a national priority, and scientists at the CDC and FDA are continuously monitoring COVID-19 vaccines to ensure their safety.

- GBS has not been seen in persons who have received the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines.
- Over 12.8 million doses of the J & J vaccine have been administered in the U.S. and 100 cases of GBS have been reported in persons who received the J & J vaccine.
- The usual or background rate (cases) of GBS that occur in the U.S., regardless of COVID-19 vaccination status, is typically between 80 to 160 cases each week.
- Doctors still recommend the J & J vaccine but want to make the public aware of this possible risk.
- Scientists are continuing to study this situation to see if the J & J vaccine is a contributing factor to the cases of GBS.
- A vaccine developed for swine flu in 1976 and a shingles vaccine have been associated with GBS.

COVID-19 remains a significant threat to public health.

- Adults 18-49 years are increasingly being hospitalized with COVID-19, accounting for a large number of COVID-related hospitalizations.
- The overwhelming majority of COVID hospitalizations in the U.S. are currently among those persons who have not yet been vaccinated.

To receive adequate protection against COVID-19 and its emerging variants, those who are unvaccinated should get vaccinated as soon as possible.

- Any of the three authorized COVID-19 vaccines including Pfizer, Moderna or J & J are recommended.
- You should receive any one of the following:

- 2 doses of the Pfizer vaccine
- 2 doses of the Moderna vaccine
- 1 dose of the J & J vaccine.
- The FDA continues to find the known and potential benefits of the J&J vaccine clearly outweigh the known and potential risks.

While the FDA has issued a warning about the J & J vaccine of the rare risk of GBS, the J & J vaccine is still recommended by the FDA.

- Most of the 100 cases of GBS were reported to the VAERS system about two weeks after persons received the J & J vaccine.
- Cases were mostly in men and in persons 50 years of age and older, with 95 out of the 100 hospitalized and 1 reported death. That cause of death is still under investigation.
- Scientists are continuing to study these cases to see if other risk factors exist in those who developed GBS.

The FDA has evaluated available data for the J & J vaccine and continues to find that the known and potential benefits of the vaccine clearly outweigh the known and potential risks.

- GBS is very rare.
- As of July 12, 2021, the Delta variant is now the cause of over 50% of new COVID-19 cases, and nearly all new cases are primarily found among unvaccinated persons.
- FDA and its partner in vaccine safety surveillance, the CDC, continue to monitor reports of GBS following vaccination with the J and J COVID-19 vaccine.

Although the risk of contracting GBS is low and most people recover completely, seek medical attention immediately if you develop any of the following symptoms after receiving the J & J vaccine:

- Weakness or tingling sensations, especially in the legs or arms, that's worsening and spreading to other parts of the body
- Difficulty walking
- Difficulty with facial movements, including speaking, chewing, or swallowing
- Double vision or inability to move eyes
- Difficulty with bladder control or bowel function

There is no cure for GBS. However, treatments are available to ease the symptoms and reduce how long the illness lasts.

- GBS attacks the body's own nervous system, resulting in weakness throughout the body over several weeks, requiring hospitalization in some cases.
- Most people recover completely, but a few may develop paralysis or sustain long-term nerve damage.
- In rare cases, death can occur, usually in instances where GBS affects lung muscles and the ability to breathe.
- A vaccine developed for swine flu in 1976 and a shingles vaccine have been associated with GBS.

Social Media Posts

Talking points, like those above, are meant for just that — talking. They shouldn't be used verbatim in print, email or social media.

Talking points are most effective when you use your own language to share the basic information found in those talking points, sharing messages in a style of speech that is both expected and best understood by your audiences. For social media, that means keeping it short, conversational, and not trying to tackle too much information at once. Stick to the most important details, and don't try to explain too much in a single post.

You wouldn't read Shakespeare to a fifth-grade class; instead, you would talk about the general themes of Shakespeare's stories and avoid the complicated language. We suggest a similar approach to using critical vaccine information on social media. For example:

Twitter (limited to 280 characters with spaces):

NOTE: Please use the following social media messages in conjunction with the associated graphics, which contain important facts about Guillain-Barré Syndrome and the J&J vaccine.

An illness called Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) has been found among some people who received the J&J vaccine. These cases are very rare. @CDCgov still recommends any authorized vaccine, including J&J, to protect yourself against #COVID19.

Authorized #COVID19 vaccines are the most effective way to stay healthy. While Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) could be connected to the J&J vaccine, the @US_FDA says the benefits outweigh the risks and continues to recommend all authorized vaccines, including the J&J vaccine.

100 J&J #COVID19 vaccine recipients out of 12.8 million have contracted Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS). The @US_FDA continues to recommend J&J and other authorized COVID-19 vaccines. Call your doctor if you experience ongoing weakness after your J&J vaccination.

Symptoms of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) include tingling in your arms and legs, difficulty walking or talking, and general feelings of weakness. If you experience these symptoms after getting your J&J #COVID19 vaccine, call your doctor immediately.

Facebook:

COVID-19 is still a major health threat in the U.S. Vaccines from Johnson & Johnson, as well as Pfizer and Moderna, are all still recommended by the CDC as the best ways to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Rare cases of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) have been reported among some who got the J&J COVID-19 vaccine, and the connection between the vaccine and GBS is being researched. If you received the J&J vaccine and experience general weakness, difficulty walking or talking, call your doctor immediately.

If you heard news about an illness called Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) found in a few cases of those who got the J&J vaccine, you should know these cases are very rare. The connection between the vaccine and GBS is still being looked into. The FDA still recommends all authorized COVID-19 vaccines as the best protection against infection.

Just 100 cases of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) have been reported out of 12.8 million recipients of the J&J COVID-19 vaccine. Research into this is ongoing. The FDA still recommends the J&J and other authorized vaccines to protect against yourself and those you care about from the threat of COVID-19.

Potential language for a flyer, mailer or website content:

A rare nervous system condition known as Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) was reported in 100 of the 12.8 million recipients of the J&J COVID-19 vaccine. The CDC and FDA are looking into whether there is a connection between GBS and the J&J vaccine. Meanwhile, the CDC continues to recommend all authorized COVID-19 vaccines, including the J&J vaccine. Keep in mind:

- Adults 18-49 years old make up who are unvaccinated more than 40 percent of COVID-related hospitalizations.
- The much more contagious COVID-19 Delta variant is the cause of more than 50 percent of all new cases, primarily found among unvaccinated persons.
- Symptoms of GBS include general weakness, tingling sensations, difficulty walking, difficulty with facial movements or speech, etc. Call your doctor immediate if you experience any of these symptoms after receiving the J&J vaccine.
- Those who are unvaccinated are at significantly greater risk of contracting COVID-19 compared to those who are fully vaccinated.
- The [J&J COVID-19 vaccine](#), along with the authorized Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, continue to be recommended by the CDC while COVID-19 remains a public health threat in the U.S.

Additional Resources:

[Mayo Clinic](#)

[CDC: GBS](#)

[FDA: Shingrix \(or Shingles\)](#)

[FDA July 13, 2021 COVID-19 Update](#)