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JCDHE pauses Johnson & Johnson vaccine administration

CDC, FDA and KDHE announce pause to further investigate rare side effects

(JOHNSON COUNTY, KANSAS – April 13) In coordination with the Federal Drug Administration, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment is immediately pausing administration of Johnson & Johnson (Janssen) single-dose vaccine, pending further investigation of safety concerns. In a joint news conference this morning, the FDA and CDC announced they are pausing the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine after six individuals across the U.S. experienced serious, and in one instance, fatal platelet-related blood clotting issues.

“JCDHE is following federal and state guidance to pause Johnson & Johnson doses,” said Dr. Sanmi Areola, JCDHE director. “Although these side effects are extremely rare, we support further investigation to promote safety of vaccine administration. These platelet-related concerns have not been reported with the Pfizer and Moderna doses. It’s crucial that vaccinations continue, so we can stop COVID-19 and its variants from continuing to spread. Most people will experience mild side effects or reactions with the vaccines. COVID-19 has claimed far too many lives in our community, and our efforts to vaccinate must continue.”

JCDHE vaccine clinics are currently administering Pfizer, and to a much lesser extent, Moderna vaccines. 7,200 Johnson & Johnson doses have been allocated to Johnson County. Because it only requires one dose, these have been largely reserved for those who might have challenges getting to a vaccine clinic twice, such as homebound residents and those who are experiencing homelessness, or who have disabilities.

Federal health officials have shared that those who have experienced serious side effects with the Johnson & Johnson vaccine have been women, between the ages of 18 and 48.

They say those who received Johnson & Johnson vaccine one month or more ago, would be at low risk of the platelet safety concern. Those affected who have experienced this issue saw symptoms within 6-13 days of vaccine administration. Symptoms of possible blood clotting include:

- Severe headache
- Abdominal or leg pain
- Shortness of breath

Those who have been vaccinated within the last two weeks with Johnson & Johnson and experience these symptoms, should contact their doctor right away. Treatment of vaccine-related blood clotting is different from traditional blood clotting treatment.

Federal officials will further review and discuss the Johnson & Johnson vaccine during a public meeting tomorrow, of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. Additional guidance about the vaccine is expected.

Learn more about the FDA/CDC decision to pause the vaccine. Watch this morning's news conference with federal health officials. Read the KDHE statement on pausing the vaccine.

Book an appointment to receive the Pfizer vaccine.

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