



COVID-19 Vaccine Update

Less than one year after COVID-19 was declared a pandemic on March 12, 2020, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued Emergency Use Authorization for three COVID-19 vaccines: Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson (J&J). A number of others are in late-stage clinical trials. All of the authorized vaccines are safe and highly effective and hopefully will bring an end to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As infectious diseases physicians, we (Sara Hurtado Bares, MD and Mark E. Rupp, MD) highly recommend getting the vaccine. We do not recommend any one vaccine over another - the best vaccine for you is the one you can get as soon as possible. However, we understand that many people have questions and concerns about these vaccines. We have done our best to answer the most common questions here. Visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines) or [nebraskamed.com/COVID/vaccine](https://www.nebraskamed.com/COVID/vaccine) for further information. Also, your healthcare provider can answer specific questions particular to your health circumstances.

Q: How do I sign up to get the vaccine?

A: Nebraska residents can register through the state website [vaccinate.ne.gov](https://www.vaccinate.ne.gov) or by calling 833.998.2275. Once registered, you will receive a notification when it is time to schedule your vaccine. Iowa residents can find information at [coronavirus.iowa.gov/pages/vaccineinformation](https://www.coronavirus.iowa.gov/pages/vaccineinformation) or by calling 211.

Q: How do the COVID-19 vaccines work?

A: Vaccines help our bodies develop immunity to the virus without causing us to get sick with the virus. The currently available vaccines work in different ways, but all introduce a harmless piece of the virus called the "spike protein" into our bodies via either mRNA (Moderna and Pfizer) or a viral vector (J&J). Our bodies recognize the protein should not be there and build antibodies that remember how to fight the virus if we are exposed in the future.

see Vaccine pg 6

Time to Schedule Your Routine Exams

During the peak of COVID, the Olson Center promoted safety by utilizing telemedicine for many of our patient appointments. When certain physical exams or laboratory tests were required, those patients had face-to-face appointments. If women were well and not having any symptoms or concerns, many yearly and routine health screenings were postponed, as suggested by guidelines. Now is the time to return to the Olson Center. We are fully open and ready to provide well woman exams and screenings:

- Annual exams
- Blood pressure checks
- Bone density
- Immunizations
- Lab work (cholesterol, glucose, thyroid)
- Mammograms
- Pap smears and pelvic exams

To schedule your appointment at the Olson Center on main campus or at Village Pointe, call 402.559.4500.



From the chairman

The COVID pandemic has created many challenges for providers, patients and the country as a whole. As I write this message I am encouraged by the recent Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) granted by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) this past weekend. This brings the total of available vaccines up to three and may alleviate some of the availability problem that states have faced to date. In addition, the most recent Johnson & Johnson vaccine requires a single shot and has much less complicated storage requirements than its predecessors. For a rural state like Nebraska, that is welcome news.

Obstetric care providers have served at the front lines of this pandemic since its beginning just over a year ago. Babies continued to be conceived and delivered despite COVID-19. To be certain, the way we cared for these patients was different, but deliveries could not be postponed, as most elective surgeries were. These same care providers want to deliver important information to our patients about vaccination against COVID-19.

Based upon the most recent information, we know that COVID-19 infection in pregnancy is associated with an increased risk of severe disease, ICU admission, ventilator support and death. The absolute risk of these serious complications is low, but certainly higher than in non-pregnant populations. Less is known about the risks of vaccine administration during pregnancy, as pregnant patients were excluded from participation in studies and the number of pregnant patients inadvertently immunized was small. Based on our understanding of the two mRNA vaccines, it is believed that risks to a pregnant or breastfeeding woman and her baby are quite low.

These facts have led the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the Society of Maternal and Fetal Medicine to recommend that vaccines should not be withheld from pregnant patients and that they should also be offered to lactating women. Patients and providers need to jointly decide about whether vaccination is appropriate and we strongly urge these conversations to occur.

Carl V. Smith, MD, FACOG

Chairman
Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
College of Medicine
University of Nebraska Medical Center

overview

Women's Health Overview

newsletter is published quarterly for health care professionals and the general public with special interest in women's health issues by the Olson Center for Women's Health.

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Women's Health Overview newsletter is available to everyone. If you would like to receive the newsletter free of charge, please contact the Olson Center at 402.559.6345 or e-mail your request to ljmolczyk@unmc.edu. If you do not wish to receive the newsletter, please contact us.

An alternative electronic version of the newsletter is available. If you would like to receive this electronic version in addition to the print version, or instead of, please email your request to ljmolczyk@unmc.edu.



research news

Fighting “Chemobrain” with Exercise

Although individuals diagnosed with cancer experience a number of health consequences, one troubling symptom is cancer-associated cognitive decline (CACD). Often referred to as “chemobrain,” CACD has been observed both in patients receiving chemotherapy and those not prescribed chemotherapy. These changes can be slight or intense, can last for a short time or be long-term, and can stay the same or get worse over time.

Cancer survivors have reported difficulties paying attention, following directions, paying bills, multi-tasking, returning to work, remembering names, finding words to express a thought and staying focused while driving a familiar route. These difficulties correspond with the cognitive domains: executive function, working memory and processing speed.

Executive function is a set of mental processes that regulate behaviors, like managing your schedule. Working memory includes the ability to temporarily store information and apply it, such as being told a phone number and then calling that number. Processing speed involves the ability to automatically and

effortlessly complete habitual tasks like driving your familiar route between work and home. Up to 75% of cancer survivors report cognitive changes during treatment, and, for some, these changes last up to 20 years after treatment ends. Unfortunately, no evidence-based treatments for CACD exist, but research supporting physical activity is promising.

Diane Ehlers, PhD, an assistant professor in the Department of Neurological Sciences in the UNMC College of Medicine, aims to use physical activity and exercise to improve cognitive function and brain health in women diagnosed with breast cancer. Dr. Ehlers’ research has linked engagement in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity among breast cancer survivors to greater executive function, working memory and processing speed. Her research has also suggested that minutes of daily sitting, especially time spent watching TV or using the computer, may also be associated with greater memory impairment in breast cancer survivors.

Currently, Dr. Ehlers and her team are implementing physical activity programs designed to improve cognitive function in

women with breast cancer. These studies test a variety of activity modes, including replacing prolonged sitting with walking, moderate-intensity exercise training and high-intensity interval training. Dr. Ehlers recently received funding from the National Institutes of Health to test a 6-month community-based exercise program, delivered at local fitness centers in Omaha and Lincoln, to 160 breast cancer survivors.

Finally, as COVID-19 has disrupted many survivors’ ability to maintain regular physical activity, Dr. Ehlers’ lab is interested in learning more about survivor experiences during the pandemic. Adults (men and women) diagnosed with cancer within the last five years are invited to complete an online survey about their experiences during COVID-19. Please visit: bit.ly/ENLpeace to learn more.

To learn more about all of Dr. Ehlers’ research, visit the Exercise Neuropsychology Laboratory’s website at: bit.ly/ENLunmc.

Contributed by Diane Ehlers, PhD
UNMC Department of Neurological Sciences

Olson Center and Department of OB-GYN News



We are sad to report that **Sonja Kinney, MD**, has relocated with her family to New Jersey. Her last day was April 16. Dr. Kinney has been the clinic medical director and director of general obstetrics and gynecology for the past 10 years, and a

member of the department for 20 years. She was responsible for many significant improvements in the OB-GYN department and the Olson Center, overseeing growth in the clinic and division over this period. Her skills, knowledge and energy will be sorely missed. We wish her all the best in her new endeavors."

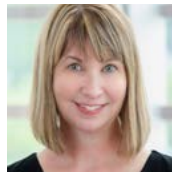
Jennifer Griffin, MD, has taken over Dr. Kinney's roles as both medical director and division director. Dr. Griffin has been with our department since 2006, and served as our residency program director. She is a specialist in gynecology and breast disease.



Laura Cudzilo, MD, will succeed Dr. Griffin as residency program director. She is a general obstetrician/gynecologist who has been with us since 2013.



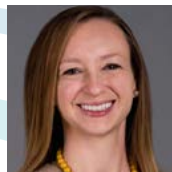
Amie Hollard, MD, has been named our new medical student director. A maternal-fetal medicine specialist with several years' experience, she joined our faculty in June 2019, coming to us from the University of Colorado.



Karen Carlson, MD, a general obstetrician-gynecologist faculty member in our department, has agreed to take on the new role of Vice-Chair for Education. In this role, she will provide additional oversight of our medical student programs, community education and instructional design. Dr. Carlson is an associate professor, and has been with the department since 2009.



We are pleased to report that the first specialty-trained pediatric/adolescent gynecologist in the region has joined our department. **Abigail Drucker, MD**, joined us in February from private practice in northwest Iowa. She will practice exclusively at Children's Hospital, and hold a full-time faculty position with our department.



We are excited to welcome **Mary Kinyoun, MD**, a general obstetrician/gynecologist who will join us in August 2021 after completing a residency at the University of Colorado.

In addition, **Melissa Mathes, MD**, will also join the general ob/gyn group in July 2021. She is currently completing her final year of residency here at UNMC.



Pamela Schaffart, CNM, MSN, a member of our certified nurse midwife team, will retire this spring. She discontinued clinical practice activities in April, and her official retirement date is June 4. Pam has been the senior member of the midwife team for several years, and as such a genuine example for others when it comes to grace, kindness, and supporting others. We are sad to see her go, but wish her a happy retirement! Her tenure at Nebraska Medicine stretches back to 2001.

Pam's replacement was hired March 29. **Elisha McDunn, APRN-CNM**, joined us after graduating from Frontier University midwifery school with a master's degree in December 2020. She is a native of Fremont, and prior to this position worked at Nebraska Medicine as a staff nurse in the adult intensive care unit for several years.



MEET OUR NEW LEADERSHIP TEAM

In addition to Dr. Griffin becoming medical director, the Olson Center for Women's Health outpatient clinics welcomed new managers in the past several months.



Lindsey Davis, MHA, is our clinic manager. Lindsey joined us in May 2020. She had previously been clinic manager for the Nebraska Medicine ENT/Audiology clinic.

Sarah Bashus, BSN, is a supervisor. Sarah took over the supervisor position vacated by Mary Wettengel, who took a promotion as clinic nurse supervisor in the urology clinic. In this role, Sarah has direct supervision of all nurses in the Olson Center. She has been in our clinic as a triage nurse for several years.





Shylo Tracy-Bartunek, LPN, is a supervisor. Shylo recently took our newest supervisor position. In this role, she has direct supervision over all rooming staff (medical assistants, patient care techs). Shylo has been with the Olson Center for several years as a staff LPN.

Lindsey, Sarah and Shylo have joined Rick Blum, director, Gina Walsh, clinic operations lead, Kim Albaugh, ultrasound lead, and Ramzy Nakad, MD, prenatal diagnostic center medical director, to complete our leadership team.

SERVICE CHANGES AT THE OLSON CENTER

We have contracted with Munroe-Meyer Institute for additional genetic counseling expertise to assist patients who are at-risk for breast and gynecologic cancer, such as those who are positive for BRCA-1 and BRCA-2 genetic mutations. In partnership with Dr. Griffin, **Brittany Bowman, MS**, now provides genetic counseling at the Olson Center to serve these patients.



Gastroenterology specialists **Kathryn Hutchins, MD**, and **Anita Sivaraman, MD**, have joined our panel of providers in the Olson Center to serve patients with gastrointestinal disorders such as acid reflux, appendicitis, gallstones and irritable bowel syndrome.



The Olson Center is a multi-faceted, comprehensive health center designed around a woman's needs. Through our many services, specialists, programs, and events, we provide you the best healthcare for every stage of your life.

Contributed by Rick G. Blum

*Administrator, UNMC Department of OB-GYN
Director, Olson Center for Women's Health Outpatient Clinics*

Mission Statement

The Mission of the Olson Center for Women's Health is to provide a national comprehensive health science center at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. Based in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the center enables UNMC to make distinctive strides in education, research, and service through innovative approaches to women's health issues.

Want More Information?

Visit our website: **OlsonCenter.com**

Learn more about our health care providers, services, and programs available at the Olson Center for Women's Health. Our website also offers women's health information. Here are a few topics:

- Breastfeeding
- Breast Health and Disease
- Cardiovascular Health
- Gastrointestinal Health
- Gynecologic Health
- Reproductive Endocrinology/Infertility
- Pregnancy
- Wellness
- Incontinence

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Vaccine continued from pg 1

Q: How effective are the COVID-19 vaccines?

A: Very effective! The currently available vaccines are 85-100% effective in preventing severe COVID-19 and, importantly, all of the vaccines have been found to prevent nearly 100% of COVID-related hospitalizations and deaths.

Q: How safe are the COVID-19 vaccines?

A: Very safe. Rarely, persons receiving COVID-19 vaccines can have serious allergic reactions. The rate of serious allergic reactions is a few cases per million doses and everyone who receives a vaccine is monitored afterwards so that allergic reactions can be treated if they occur.

Q: Will the currently approved vaccines work against the new variants?

A: All of the currently available vaccines appear to be highly effective against the most common variant found in the US (UK B 1.1.7). There is less information on the variants that were initially described in South Africa (B 1.351) and Brazil (P.1), but available information suggests that the level of protection induced by current vaccines may be somewhat diminished, but still highly effective.

Q: What common side effects occur from COVID-19 vaccines?

A: The most commonly reported side effects are pain at the injection site,

muscle aches, fatigue, and fevers. These side effects are more common after the second vaccine dose and usually resolve in 1-2 days.

Q: Why do some of the vaccines require two shots?

A: The Moderna and Pfizer vaccines both require two shots. The first shot starts building protection, but everyone has to come back a few weeks later for the second shot to get the best and most durable protection the vaccine can offer. The J&J vaccine only requires one dose.

Q: Are there any reasons NOT to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

A: The only medical reason to avoid a COVID-19 vaccine is serious allergic reaction to vaccine ingredients. The mRNA vaccines contain PEG – an ingredient in some forms of laxatives. If you've experienced an allergic reaction to a laxative, talk to your provider before taking a mRNA COVID vaccine. Also, you should not get the vaccine if you are sick at the time of vaccination, including those who are experiencing COVID-19 infection.

Q: How soon after receiving the vaccine am I considered immune?

A: It typically takes a couple of weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination and full protection is not achieved until two weeks after the last dose in the series.

Q: How long will my immunity last after I get the vaccine?

A: It is not known how long the protective effect from the vaccines lasts. However, available information indicates it is at least six months – and hopefully much longer. We just have not had enough time to follow vaccinated persons to determine the duration of effectiveness.

Q: Can I still transmit the virus after I am vaccinated?

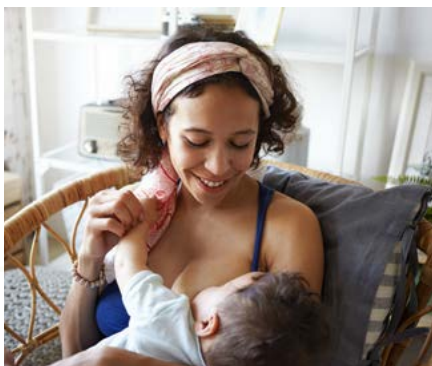
A: It is possible for someone who has been vaccinated to develop asymptomatic infection and spread the virus, but this is much less likely to occur in someone who is vaccinated than in someone who is not vaccinated. This is why public health experts recommend that vaccinated people continue to wear masks when in public.

Q: When will children be able to get the vaccine?

A: Teens over the age of 16 will be able to receive the vaccine when it becomes available to the general public (the Pfizer vaccine is authorized for those 16 and older and the Moderna and J&J vaccines are authorized for those 18 and older). Studies are in progress to determine safety and effectiveness in younger children.

**Contributed by
Sara Hurtado Bares, MD
and Mark E. Rupp, MD**

*UNMC Department of Internal Medicine
Infectious Diseases Division*



*Save the Date: Aug. 25, 2021
Breastfeeding: Baby's Natural Choice Virtual Conference*

Featuring national speakers:

- **Thomas Hale, PhD, R.Ph**, Texas Tech Health Sciences Center
- **Christine Smillie, MD, IBCLC, FAAP, FABM**, Breastfeeding Resources
- **Andrea Leigh Braden, MD, IBCLC**, Emory University School of Medicine
- **Nekisha Killings, MPH, IBCLC, RLC** and **Nikki Hunter Greenaway, FNP-C, IBCLC, RLC**, Lactation Education Resources

For information on this virtual event, call 402.559.6345.



The MIND Diet

The MIND diet takes two eating patterns – the Mediterranean diet and the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet – and blends them together to emphasize foods that may impact brain health. MIND stands for the “Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay.”

Research indicates the MIND diet may lower the risk of developing dementia and Alzheimer’s disease. According to the Alzheimer’s Association, an estimated 5.8 million Americans age 65 and older have Alzheimer’s dementia today. It is predicted this number may grow to 13.8 million by mid-century. Making changes to your diet now may help with healthy cognitive aging.

The MIND diet encourages the use of these foods:

Green Leafy Vegetables: Have at least one serving a day of greens such as spinach, kale, collards, mustard greens, or arugula. One serving is 1 cup raw or ½ cup cooked. These leafy greens contain many healthy nutrients including vitamin A, vitamin C, folate, and fiber.

Other Vegetables: Have at least one serving a day of another vegetable. One serving is ½ cup. Examples include asparagus, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, carrots, cauliflower, green beans, mushrooms, onions, snow peas, squash, bell peppers, sweet potatoes, and tomatoes.

Nuts: Aim for five servings of nuts a week. One serving is 1 oz, which is a small handful. Grab peanuts, almonds, walnuts, cashews, pecans or pistachios for a snack or use a natural peanut butter or almond butter.

Berries: Bring some bright colors into your diet with berries!

Have at least five servings a week where one serving is equal to ½ cup. Blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries are excellent choices. Berries have a high level of antioxidants that may be brain protective.

Beans and Legumes: Include at least three servings a week of black, pinto, cannellini, garbanzo, kidney, red/white, and navy beans or lentils, tofu, and edamame. One serving is ½ cup. Beans and legumes provide a protein and fiber source that can be used in meatless meals.

Whole Grains: Have three servings a day of a whole grain item such as whole grain bread, brown rice, wild rice, whole grain pasta, quinoa, barley, bulgur, farro, oats, or whole grain cereal. One serving is ½ cup or one slice of bread. Check the ingredient lists for the name of the grain or the terms “whole grain” or “100% whole wheat” as the first ingredient.

Fish: Incorporate at least one serving of fish a week. One serving is 3-5 oz. Grilled or baked fish such as salmon, tilapia, cod, halibut and mahi mahi are examples as well as canned tuna or salmon which can be used for a quick meal or snack.

Poultry: Have at least two servings a week of skinless chicken or turkey breast. One serving is 3-5 ozs. Both of these are packed with a high protein content.

Extra Virgin Olive Oil: Aim to include two tablespoons a day when cooking. Drizzle olive oil in the pan when sautéing foods, roasting vegetables, in salad dressings, or use it as a dip for whole grain bread instead of butter or margarine. Olive oil is rich in monounsaturated fats which is healthy for the brain.

The MIND diet also advises limiting certain food items. Have the following items in moderation:

Red Meat and Processed Meat: Have no more than three servings a week where one serving is equal to 3-5 oz. Limit intake of beef, lamb, pork, ham, burgers, hot dogs, bacon, sausage, and salami.

Butter and Stick Margarine: Use less than one pat (teaspoon) a day.

Regular Cheese: Have no more than 2 oz. a week. A slice of cheese, a cheese stick, or about ¼ cup shredded cheese is equal to 1 oz.

Pastries and Other Sweets: Aim for no more than four treats a week. This includes cake, sweet rolls, donuts, cookies, brownies, pie, candy, and ice cream.

Fried Foods and Fast Foods: Limit this to one meal a week. Fried foods from restaurants and even potato chips fall into this category.

Start with creating one goal or making changes in one category at a time to make permanent, lifelong habits to support a healthy brain throughout the aging process!

Contributed by

Jenna Wuebker, MS, RD, LMNT

Nebraska Medicine Neurological Sciences



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Remembering Joseph Scott Jr., MD



Joseph Scott Jr., MD, former chair of the UNMC Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, died March 6. He was 89 years old.

Dr. Scott was known both locally and nationally for his contributions to academic medicine and to the field of obstetrics and gynecology. After serving 31 years at UNMC, he retired in 1995 and was appointed professor emeritus. Dr. Scott chaired the UNMC Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology from 1974 to 1987 and served for many years on the executive council of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Carl Smith, MD, chair and Olson Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, said the success of the department stands on the shoulders of people like Dr. Scott.

"He led the department through some challenging times and did so with grace and poise," Dr. Smith said.

Described as the epitome of an academic physician, Dr. Scott was a superb gentleman whose kindness extended to everyone he met, he said.

"I had the privilege of knowing Joe for 45 years and watched him encourage and support his faculty. We will miss him terribly. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his wife Louise and the rest of his family," Dr. Smith said.

Contributed by Lisa Spellman
UNMC Strategic Communications

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