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Updated Guidance about the Johnson and Johnson Vaccine

December 17, 2021

On December 17, the CDC endorsed updated recommendations made by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) for the prevention of COVID-19. There is now a preference for individuals to receive an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) over Johnson and Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The CDC endorsed an ACIP recommendation for mRNA vaccines to be used over the J&J vaccine
- Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia is a rare syndrome that has occurred in 54 people out of more than 17 million doses given. 39% of those cases have been fatal.

These updated recommendations are made in response to rare cases of thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS). TTS occurs at a rate of about 1 case in every 100,000 doses among women 30-49 years old but has occurred in both men and women and in a wide age range. There have been a total of 54 cases of TTS identified out of a total of more than 17 million doses of the J&J vaccine given. Nine people have died. Of those who have been diagnosed with TTS, 21 (39%) had no risk factors for thrombosis.

Symptoms of TTS include headache, blurred vision, fainting, loss of consciousness and seizures. If a patient presents with any of these findings, clinicians should have a high level of suspicion for TTS. The median time from vaccination to symptom onset is 9 days with a range from 0-18 days. 72% of those who had TTS received the Janssen vaccine before the pause on April 13th. All cases have occurred after dose 1 of the vaccine.

Persons who choose to receive a Janssen COVID-19 vaccine should be informed about the following as part of the pre-vaccination discussion with the vaccine provider:

- Risk and symptoms of TTS that could occur within the 2 weeks following vaccination
- The need to **seek immediate medical care** should symptoms develop
- The availability of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines

It is **contraindicated** to administer Janssen COVID-19 vaccine to persons with a history of TTS following receipt of Janssen or other adenovirus vector-based COVID-19 vaccines (e.g. AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine).

Janssen COVID-19 vaccines **may be** offered to the following populations:

- Persons with a contraindication to mRNA COVID-19 vaccines (e.g. severe allergic reaction after a previous dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine or allergy to a component of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine)
- Persons who would otherwise remain unvaccinated for COVID-19 due to limited access to mRNA COVID-19 vaccines
- Persons who would prefer the Janssen COVID-19 vaccine despite safety concerns identified

Resources

- Updates to the benefit/risk assessment for Janssen COVID-19 vaccines: Applying the Evidence to Recommendation Framework (cdc.gov)
- CDC Awardee COVID-19 Vaccination Planning Meeting