



# COVID-19 VACCINES: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

By Mark Cotton, DO, Primary Care Physician

*With the arrival of effective vaccines that can protect us from COVID-19, we have a great opportunity to put this pandemic behind us. In this issue of Making Communities Healthier, we're asking Dr. Mark Cotton, a primary care physician with Southwestern Medical Center, some of the most frequently asked questions about COVID-19 vaccines. Read on to learn more about these vaccines and how they can help us get back to all the things we've been missing over the past year.*

**Making Communities Healthier: The COVID-19 vaccines have been created quickly relative to other vaccines throughout the history of medicine. Are they safe?**

Dr. Cotton: Yes. COVID-19 vaccines have gone through the same rigorous process to gain the FDA authorization that all vaccines available in the U.S. have gone through. As for the speed with which

*Continued on page 2*

## Ask a Doc



**Jennifer James, MD,**  
is a primary care  
physician.

**QUESTION:** *What can I do at home to manage my seasonal allergy suffering?*

**ANSWER:** If you find yourself fighting the recurring battle of seasonal allergies, there are some things you can do to help mitigate your symptoms. Know your triggers and watch the weather. Check your local news outlet for a daily or weekly pollen and mold count so you can know what to expect and try to avoid the outdoors on those days when the count isn't in your favor. Also, take a shower. It sounds simple, but taking a shower and washing your hair and clothes after outdoor activities can help minimize your exposure to allergens. Finally, defend yourself. Wear a mask when mowing the lawn to reduce inhaled allergens, and consider taking appropriate, over-the-counter medication before going outdoors for extended periods. ■





## A note from the CEO

Each spring, we witness the annual renewal of life – flowers bloom, trees grow their leaves again and the sun offers its comforting warmth. It’s one of the reasons spring is so closely associated with hope. This year, with the arrival of COVID-19 vaccines, we have more reason than ever to hope for an end to this pandemic and a return to what we’ve been missing over the last year.

We all continue to have a big role to play in putting this pandemic behind us, and I encourage you to get vaccinated when you are able to do so. In this issue of *Making Communities Healthier*, we’re answering some of the most frequently asked questions about COVID-19 vaccines to help you be knowledgeable and ready when it’s your turn to be a #vaccinehero.

In addition to what you need to know about COVID-19 vaccines, we’ve filled this issue with tips and advice on men’s health, mental health and battling allergies, as well as opportunities to get to know a couple members of our staff a little better.

As always, it is our privilege and honor to serve you and we are so grateful that you trust us with your healthcare. ■

Wishing you a happy and healthy spring,  
Elizabeth Jones

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they were developed, there are a few important factors that played a pivotal role there, including already existing research, advanced technology that we didn’t have decades ago and unprecedented partnership and funding around the world to develop a vaccine and save lives. These vaccines went through extensive testing prior to authorization by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), so you can have peace of mind knowing they are safe.

### **MCH: How effective are the vaccines in protecting someone from COVID-19?**

Dr. Cotton: These vaccines have been proven effective in reducing the risk of getting infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19, decreasing the likelihood of having a severe case of COVID-19 and reducing hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19.

### **MCH: Are there any side effects one might experience after being vaccinated?**

Dr. Cotton: The good news is that any potential side effects are mostly mild to moderate, with the most common ones including pain or soreness at the injection site, headache and fatigue. I know even mild side effects can be a nuisance, but I will tell you from my experience caring for patients and families during this pandemic that these side effects are infinitely preferable to the complications that arise with a serious case of COVID-19. It’s also important to note that the vaccines do not contain the live COVID-19 virus, so it is NOT possible to contract COVID-19 from being vaccinated.

### **MCH: How many doses are required for a full vaccination?**

Dr. Cotton: Your dose regimen will depend on the type of vaccine you receive. Some COVID-19 vaccines require a two-dose regimen, while another type may only require one dose.

### **MCH: What if I have already had COVID-19 and recovered? Do I still need to get vaccinated?**

Dr. Cotton: Yes. The vaccine is recommended even if you have already had COVID-19 and recovered. While you may have antibodies to help fight off another infection after being infected initially, the length and effectiveness of that natural protection is unknown.

### **MCH: Do I still need to wear a mask after being vaccinated?**

Dr. Cotton: For now, the short answer is yes for several reasons. Firstly, vaccines take some time to get to work in your body. In fact, it can take a couple of weeks for antibodies to build up in your immune system. And since the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines require two doses, that timeline gets extended a bit. So, you would be fully vaccinated 2 weeks after your second shot for a two-dose vaccine. We don’t yet know the full protection timeline for the single dose vaccine that we expect to come soon. Secondly, it will take some time to get vaccines distributed widely across our community and country and get the majority of our population vaccinated.

Until that day comes when vaccines are widely administered, it is so important that we continue to do everything we can to stop the spread of this virus. That includes wearing our masks in public places, continuing to practice social distancing and maintaining good hand hygiene.

### **MCH: Frontline healthcare providers have been among the first to receive the vaccines. Why did you choose to get the vaccine, and why is it so important to get vaccinated?**

Dr. Cotton: I received the vaccine so I could do my part in helping rid our community of this pandemic. I did it for my patients, my family, my friends and my neighbors. With these vaccines, we are on the right track to putting this pandemic behind us and getting back to a more normal way of life. Like so many things that are worthwhile, it will take all of our community joining together to make it happen. That means continuing to wash our hands, practice social distancing and wear our masks, and all of us choosing to get vaccinated when we can so that we can get back to spending time with friends and family, attending concerts, traveling or whatever it is that you enjoy and have been missing. I strongly encourage everyone in our community to be a vaccine hero when you have the opportunity to get your shot – do it for your family, for your friends, for yourself and for the overall well-being of our community.

*To learn more and stay updated on COVID-19 vaccines, including when and where you will be able to get vaccinated, visit [SWMOnline.com/coronavirus-19-preparedness-information](https://www.swmconline.com/coronavirus-19-preparedness-information) ■*



## Mission Moment

Dianna Marin, RN  
DIRECTOR,  
SURGICAL/ORTHO

While she was working on her pre-med degree, Dianna observed that physicians didn’t have very much time to spend with their patients. Because of

this, she decided to go into nursing.

“I love being a nurse. I enjoy getting to know my patients and their families,” she said. “Sometimes it’s the simple things I can do, like holding someone’s hand, that can make a big difference.”

Dianna was also the recipient of LifePoint’s company-wide Mercy Award. An honor bestowed upon local team members who exemplify the caring spirit and values of LifePoint’s founding chairman and CEO Scott Mercy. ■

## May is Mental Health Month

Did you know that, according to findings published by Mental Health America, one in five adults has a mental health condition? While mental health issues are quite common, there has been a longtime reluctance to openly discuss mental health concerns.

Mental health has a profound impact on our overall well-being, influencing how we socialize with others, how productive we are at work and at home, how we make decisions and how we cope with the stresses that life can bring.

If you are suffering from a mental health issue, it is important to know that you are not alone and that it is ok to ask for help. The benefits of seeking help and treatment can make a positive difference in your overall quality of life.

*If you think that you or someone you know is suffering, we can help. Visit [SWMOnline.com/behavioral-health](https://www.swmconline.com/behavioral-health) for more info, or visit [SWMOnline.com](https://www.swmconline.com) and click on the Find a Doctor tab to get connected with care that can improve your mental health and enhance your well-being. Learn more about mental health at [mentalhealth.gov](https://www.mentalhealth.gov)*



## MEN’S HEALTH CHECKLIST

Men, how’s your health? June is Men’s Health Month – a good time to evaluate your current level of wellness and make sure you’re on top of your health. There are several things you can do to achieve a higher quality of life and take your health to the next level. Check out the list below. How many of these can you check off?



**REGULAR CHECK-UPS WITH A PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER.** Annual check-up visits with a PCP can help with staying up to date on screenings, can help flag any issues before they become serious, help you manage any chronic conditions and even reduce your overall health expenses.



**GET AN EXERCISE ROUTINE AND KEEP IT FRESH.** The benefits of regular exercise can lengthen life expectancy, lower your risk for many common health issues, increase your mental health and give you healthier bones, muscles and joints.



**EAT SMART.** A healthy and balanced diet plays a big role in optimum performance and health. Focus on nutrient-rich foods like veggies, fruits, whole grains, beans, nuts and seeds and lean protein. Limit foods and drinks that are high in calories, sugar, salt, saturated fat and alcohol. And don’t forget to jumpstart your metabolism with a healthy breakfast.



**GET SOME SLEEP.** Think of sleep like health currency. It’s crucial to physical and mental performance so make sure you’ve got the right amount in your body’s bank. When you sleep better, you live better.

*Learn more about men’s health at [menshealthmonth.org](https://www.menshealthmonth.org). If you need a primary care provider, visit [SWMOnline.com](https://www.swmconline.com) and click on the Find a Doctor tab to get connected to the right care for you.*





# Southwestern Medical Center

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## This bread is bananas!

Looking to tame your sweet tooth? Try this lighter version of a bona fide classic.

Cooking spray	4 medium semi-ripe bananas (mashed with a fork)
2 cups all-purpose flour	1 large egg
3 tbsp stevia sweetener (or 18 stevia sweetener packets)	½ cup 100% orange juice
2 tsp baking powder	1/3 cup extra-light olive oil
½ tsp baking soda	1 cup chopped walnuts (optional)
½ tsp ground cinnamon	

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Lightly spray two 9 x 5 x 3-inch loaf pans with cooking spray.
3. In a large bowl, stir together the flour, stevia sweetener, baking powder, baking soda and cinnamon until well blended.
4. In a medium bowl, stir together the bananas, egg, juice and oil until well blended.
5. Pour banana mixture into the flour mixture, stirring together just until moistened but no flour is visible. Stir in the walnuts. Pour the batter into the pans, about halfway full, smoothing the tops.
6. Bake for 40 minutes, or until a wooden toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Transfer the pans to a cooling rack. Let cool completely.
7. Enjoy!

\*Recipe from the American Heart Association. Find more healthy recipes at [heart.org/recipes](http://heart.org/recipes)



## Meet Michael Oliver, DO

Dr. Oliver has been part of the SWMC emergency department team since 2014 and has more than 20 years of experience. “I chose emergency medicine to help people and make an immediate difference,” he said. “It’s very rewarding to provide care to patients during a crisis.”

Dr. Oliver enjoys outdoor activities such as camping, off-roading and motorcycle riding. He is also a Walter’s native and, along with his family, is proud to call southwest Oklahoma home. ■

*DISCLAIMER: The information and practices described in this newsletter are not intended as substitutes for a diagnosis or clinical or medical advice prescribed by a medical provider for an individual patient that is based on the individual’s history, condition and current medical assessment. This information is not intended to be comprehensive about the subjects addressed and may include information that is time-sensitive and subject to change.*