



Video Transcript

COVID-19 Vaccine

Dr. Nehemiah Thrash, M.D.

[Music plays]

Dr. Nehemiah Thrash: Frequently, people ask me what are the benefits of getting the vaccine. I think it's very important to understand what would be the risk of not getting the vaccine.

Here's what we know so far. We're dealing with a new infection that is causing havoc in the community. It's not like anything that we've ever seen.

What we know is that approximately 31 million people in our country have been infected by this virus. Of people that we've tested, of the 31 million, 560,000 of them have passed away. It's enough to cause a mortality around 2%. It's also enough to be the third leading cause of death in our country for the past year.

It has shut down health systems, it has overwhelmed morgues, so the key to me is: What are the risks of not getting the vaccine? The benefit shows us it prevents severe illness and death at a very high rate.

Looking at the data in the research, I can also tell you that this vaccine is very possibly more safe than medications that I prescribe on a daily basis to treat any patient in the hospital.

Many people say "You know what, I'm going to take my chances. I'm not going to get the vaccine. I'm going to wait. I'm going to wait to see the long-term effects of getting the vaccine, and you know what, I think I'm healthy enough. I believe I can handle it." Looking at the total picture, looking at the past year, I would say that that is a very bad bet to me.

I don't know if our country can afford being shut down again. I don't know if we can afford keeping children home again. Betting to not get the vaccine is also betting to take your chance of getting the virus and causing destruction, not only to your career, not only to your health, but also the potential of it happening again and again and again.

So my first patient was March 10, and I will never forget her. And since then, it's come in waves, and each wave is completely different. This most recent wave, the patients that I'm treating today, are ironically patients who had the opportunity to get the vaccine, and they did not get it. And when I talked to them, and when I talked to their families and I discussed why they did not get the vaccine, they're still very reluctant.

The main reason that I hear is fear — they're afraid of getting the vaccine. It's a new medication, a new treatment — they don't know what the long-term effects are going to be. But being a physician, to treat coronavirus, let me tell you a secret. When you're in the hospital with me, I don't know what the long-term effects are going to be if you're on a ventilator for a month. I don't know what the long-term effects are going to be if you're on 100% concentrated oxygen for weeks. I don't know what the long-term effects are going to be if you're on steroids for greater than 10 days.

But what we do know are the short-term effects and what are becoming the long-term effects of this virus. We know that if you're in a hospital with me, 50% of the patients are going to have neurological disease. Whether it's just a headache, up into having seizures and strokes. We also know a significant portion are going to have cardiac disease. We also know some people are going to end up having this long haul or this long COVID type of syndrome in which they just don't feel well and just don't feel themselves, like my friend who is currently in the hospital.

With this being said, our reluctance to get the vaccine is mostly based on fear. But as a country and as a medical community, we've been using and studying vaccines for over 200 years. They are by far the safest of the medications or medical therapies that we can give to people.

I was reluctant, I was skeptical to get the vaccine, I was scared. Since March 10, every time I've gone to work, I had to treat a coronavirus patient, and what finally convinced me to get the vaccine were the studies that show that they were safe. And the people that I trust, trust the vaccine. The people who have been training me in medicine for 15, 16 years, reviewed the vaccine. They studied the vaccine, the specialists who make vaccines, approve the vaccines.

But lastly, when I came home, and I believe it was Dec. 13, when I walked through the door, my children ran up to me and said "Daddy, did you hear the vaccines are ready? You can finally get the vaccine to be safe." So at that time, I realized, oh my goodness my children and my wife — they're terrified about me going to work and possibly catching this virus and bringing it home.

I tolerated the vaccine, as well my mother and father got into vaccines. My two sisters got the vaccine, my wife just got her first dose, and she's actually a nursing mother. So while she's nursing our 9-month-old son, she's gotten the vaccine.

First, to everyone that's watching, it's been a very hard year, and I just want to say "thank you." If you wore your mask and got the vaccine, thank you. If you do not did not get the vaccine, if you're still concerned about it, I just want to let you know that I'm available to you.

I'm one of the people who are treating these patients. If you would like to contact me or contact your primary care providers, or just people in the community, please talk to them to discuss getting this vaccine or not.

Again I don't sell the vaccine. I don't work for these companies, but I'm obligated to give you the medical truth. I'm obligated to tell you what's best for your care at this moment, and right now it will be the mask and the vaccine.