



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**  
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April 14, 2021

**TO:** All DOC Staff

**FROM:** Dan Johnson, Assistant Secretary, Health Services

  
Sara Kariko, Chief Medical Officer

**SUBJECT:** Update on J&J COVID-19 Vaccine Administration Pause

As [shared yesterday](#), April 14, 2021, the Department of Corrections' Health Services has paused administration of the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen (J&J) vaccine based on guidance received from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Federal Drug Administration (FDA), based on the appearance of a rare but serious side effect, including serious brain blood clots combined with low platelet counts in six patients, all women under 50.

The vaccine pause was taken out of an abundance of caution to ensure that the health care provider community is aware of the potential for these adverse events and how to treat this rare, but serious side effect. At this time there is no indication that any of the people impacted were from Washington State.

The J&J vaccine continues to be a safe and effective option, and the pause was not due to any issue with the vaccine itself. During this pause the CDC and FDA will ensure that medical practitioners have the tools they need to continue providing this vaccine in a safe way.

While adverse events, such as blood clots, are very unfortunate, it is important to remember that out of 6.8 million J&J vaccines administered nationwide, only six people are known to have experienced this side effect. That is a fraction of a percent, which shows us that this side effect, while serious, is extremely rare.

This also demonstrates how well the robust vaccine safety monitoring systems work, since this potential safety concern was identified quickly, and vaccines were paused to allow for further investigation. While no definitive cause has been identified yet, the FDA said that a probable cause is a rare immune response generated by an individual after receiving the vaccine.

Your health and safety remain our priority and the priority of Washington State Department of Health. We will continue to monitor the situation related to the J&J vaccine and will provide updates on its use as the pause is reviewed, and once it is lifted. In the meantime, we continue to offer Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine as supply is available.

Getting vaccinated is an important, safe step in ensuring the health and safety of ourselves and those around us.

***"Working Together for SAFER Communities"***