

FACT

Natural Immunity vs. COVID-19 Vaccines

If I've already had COVID-19, I don't need the vaccine, right? This is a question that many have been asking since the vaccines became available. As many misconceptions continue to swirl around the importance of vaccination to reaching herd immunity, it's critical to know the facts.

FACT: Vaccination is the safest way to reach herd immunity.

Herd immunity is a group protection that happens when a large part of a population becomes immune to a specific disease, which significantly lowers the risk of spreading the disease. In past pandemics, such as the 1918 flu pandemic, herd immunity was reached through enough people becoming infected by the virus. That path to herd immunity results in more illness, hospitalizations and death. It would be extremely dangerous to take that approach with COVID-19. It could overwhelm our healthcare system and cause unnecessary deaths, especially in the elderly and immunocompromised population. The best way to reach herd immunity from COVID-19 is for enough people to become immune through vaccination.

FACT: Vaccination provides stronger immunity than getting infected.

Over the past several months, it has become clear the vaccines provide much greater immunity than being infected with COVID-19. While those who have been infected have some protection, the biggest limit to natural immunity is the amount of time that protection lasts. The protection time frame from natural immunity may become smaller when you factor in the increased transmissibility of the delta variant and other future mutations of the original COVID-19 strain. Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect yourself and others for longer periods of time.

FACT: Getting vaccinated after infection provides much greater protection than natural immunity alone.

For those who were already infected with COVID-19, getting vaccinated adds an extra layer of immunity that the body's natural antibodies cannot produce. A recent study published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found unvaccinated people who have had COVID-19 are more than twice as likely to be reinfected with the virus compared with people who were fully vaccinated after contracting the virus.

FACT: The dangers posed by the delta variant make vaccination even more important.

The delta variant has become Louisiana and Mississippi's dominant strain due to the states' low vaccination rates combined with the fact that it spreads at least 50% faster than the original strain of COVID-19 and transmits a higher amount of viral particles to those infected. Nearly all patients hospitalized with COVID-19 in the U.S. are unvaccinated. Since Louisiana and Mississippi retain the lowest vaccination rates in the nation, we are seeing high infection and hospitalization rates in our states. Getting vaccinated protects you from contracting the virus, but most importantly, it protects you from severe symptoms experienced by unvaccinated individuals that lead to hospitalization and death.

Schedule your vaccination appointment today through **the MyChart app** or by calling **(985) 898-4001**. Visit StTammany.health/COVID19 for more information on COVID in our community. For additional COVID-19 information and resources, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov) or the Louisiana Department of Health (ldh.la.gov) website.

