COVID-19 Vaccines and MS Video Series
The Importance of Getting Vaccinated
Featuring:
Barry Hendin, MD

Barry Hendin:

Hi, I'm Barry Hendin. I'm Chief Medical Officer for MSAA. In addition, I'm a clinical professor of neurology at the University of Arizona, I run the MS Clinic at Banner - University Medical Center, and have a private practice, MS Center of Arizona.

People living with MS do have all of the associated risks that everyone else has regarding COVID-19.

Although MS does not in and of itself create some unique increase in risk, if there is progressive disability, that progressive disability is associated with increased risk.

If we know you're having problems with gait, using a cane, using a walker, and a wheelchair, cardiorespiratory illnesses, renal failure, obesity, uncontrolled diabetes, all of those add risk.

People with MS don't have significant increase in risk just due to their MS, but they do have the potential for increase in risk due to progressive disability.

With regards to the safety of the vaccinations that we're using, all these agents are substantially safe.

There are modest risks associated with any vaccination, but those modest risks are far outweighed by the serious risks of COVID-19.

We definitely recommend that most people with MS should be vaccinated and should get boosters.

There are obviously exceptions, and ultimately, that's a discussion you're going to have with your clinician.

But to the question, are most people with MS appropriate for vaccination? The answer is absolutely yes.

The reason for the use of these vaccinations is, essentially, to reduce the chance that you'll get COVID-19 symptomatically, that if you get it, you won't be quite as ill, if you're ill, that you won't be hospitalized, and if you're hospitalized, that you won't be intubated with a risk of death.

The vaccinations give the immune system a hint, a preview, of what an infection would be like with COVID-19, and by so doing, there is a better ability to attack the virus when it indeed presents itself.