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The FDA has issued emergency use authorization for three vaccines and may consider the AstraZeneca vaccine soon. These vaccines are all important tools to end the COVID-19 pandemic. At Allina Health, we're administering vaccines as quickly as possible according to state guidance and working to communicate information as it becomes available.

I want to share with you more about the safety and efficacy of all three vaccines currently approved by the FDA and why it's important to consider taking the first vaccine that's made available to you.

We can only offer the vaccines we have been allocated from the government and the amounts of each vary from week to week. When you schedule your vaccine, you will be notified which of the three FDA approved vaccines from either Moderna, Pfizer, or Janssen will be available at your appointment. We're working to make it easier for you to know ahead of time which Allina Health location have which vaccine so you can make a plan if you have a preference or need for a specific vaccine manufacturer.

You may be wondering, what are the differences in each of the vaccines? One significant difference between vaccines is that the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines require two doses, and the second dose must be scheduled within a certain symptom from the first. The Janssen vaccine only requires one dose.

We cannot accurately compare the effectiveness of vaccines without a direct comparison in head-to-head trials, which did not occur for these vaccines. However, data tells us that all of the vaccines approved by the FDA are safe and effective in preventing and reducing severe complications, hospitalizations, and deaths from COVID-19.

All COVID-19 vaccines were tested in clinical trials involving tens of thousands of people to make sure they meet safety standards and protect adults of all ages, races, and ethnicities. In large clinical trials, most side effects were minor and only last a few days. It is also safe to receive the vaccine if you have an underlying health condition or if you've experienced allergic reactions not related to vaccines.

With the arrival of new COVID-19 variants that have high transmission rates, it is more important than ever that as many people get vaccinated as quickly as possible. Having several safe and effective vaccines available for this effort is extremely important and you should consider receiving the first vaccine made available to you. There may be reasons you prefer one vaccine over another, and there is a lot of information out there about each vaccine. I encourage you to research questions you may have so you feel informed and comfortable with your vaccination options.

It's important to check with your physician or provider if you have concerns about receiving the vaccine.

He or she can help you evaluate your options and feel more comfortable about what to expect.

Even if you are at low risk for severe complications from COVID-19, getting a vaccine can help protect you and keep the community safe by stopping the spread of the virus to vulnerable people you may come into contact with. As a physician who works in the hospital, I can say that taking proactive steps to protect yourself and others, like getting vaccinated, is one of the best things you can personally do to help end the pandemic.

We care about you, your health, and your experience. Please know that we are working hard to keep you informed as we receive more information. Eventually, we expect to be able to vaccinate all adults who want a COVID-19 vaccine as supplies increase. And remember, the latest updates can be found at our COVID-19 vaccine resource page.

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