The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH)
Health Alert Network (HAN)
Alabama Emergency Response Technology (ALERT)
April 13, 2021

CDC and FDA Request Pause on Use of J & J Vaccine

On Tuesday, April 13, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) issued a joint statement on the Johnson and Johnson COVID-19 vaccine. The statement follows:

As of April 12, more than 6.8 million doses of the Johnson & Johnson (Janssen) vaccine have been administered in the U.S. CDC and FDA are reviewing data involving six reported U.S. cases of a rare and severe type of blood clot in individuals after receiving the J&J vaccine. In these cases, a type of blood clot called cerebral venous sinus thrombosis (CVST) was seen ***in combination*** *with low levels of blood platelets (thrombocytopenia). All six cases occurred among women between the ages of 18 and 48, and symptoms occurred 6 to 13 days after vaccination. Treatment of this specific type of blood clot is different from the treatment that might typically be administered. Usually, an anticoagulant drug called heparin is used to treat blood clots. In this setting, administration of heparin may be dangerous, and alternative treatments need to be given.*

CDC will convene a meeting of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) on Wednesday to further review these cases and assess their potential significance. FDA will review that analysis as it also investigates these cases. Until that process is complete, we are recommending a pause in the use of this vaccine out of an abundance of caution. This is important, in part, to ensure that the health care provider community is aware of the potential for these adverse events and can plan for proper recognition and management due to the unique treatment required with this type of blood clot.

Right now, these adverse events appear to be extremely rare. COVID-19 vaccine safety is a top priority for the federal government, and we take all reports of health problems following COVID-19 vaccination very seriously. People who have received the J&J vaccine who develop severe headache, abdominal pain, leg pain, or shortness of breath within three weeks after vaccination should contact their health care provider. Health care providers are asked to report adverse events to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System at https://vaers.hhs.gov/reportevent.html.

Additional information will be provided as more is known. For now, please hold any J & J vaccine that has been received at the appropriate temperature. Orders for the J & J vaccine are currently on hold.

Reminder on CDC Recommendations Concerning Masking, Social Distancing and Sanitizing

The SARS-CoV-2 virus continues to circulate within Alabama and nationally so COVID-19 is not over. There are multiple variants circulating within AL which have been identified within all public health districts. Providers are asked to remind their staff and patients to continue to wear their masks, to practice social distancing and frequent hand washing per CDC's guidance. The discontinuation of the mandatory mask requirement by Governor Ivey does not negate the CDC guidance. For additional information go to https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html