

# West Michigan Rheumatology, PLLC

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## People with Rheumatic Diseases and the J&J COVID Vaccine

**Summary:** Should Rheumatology/immunosuppressed patients get COVID Vaccine? **Yes**, any of the 3 currently available vaccines would be fine. None of them are considered “live” and will not cause infection. Other than the generally expected mild/moderate side effects reported from a vaccine, there are no additional dangers or problems from the vaccine when given to Rheumatology patients based on available data. Benefit of vaccine to prevent severe disease/death, far outweighs any risk. Follow ACR guide for holding or timing of meds if applicable.

- 1) **The Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 vaccine uses a “replication-incompetent” human adenovirus.** This adenovirus cannot multiply or cause infection following administration to humans, and available data from the FDA demonstrate that it is quickly cleared from tissues following injection.
- 2) **What is an adenovirus:** There are many types, but most infections with adenovirus cause infections of the upper respiratory tract in humans (colds and conjunctivitis/pink eye).
- 3) **Why is an adenovirus required in this vaccine and can I catch it from the vaccine:** Since the J&J vaccine contains an incompetent adenovirus, you cannot get sick/catch an adenovirus infection from this vaccine. The adenovirus acts like a capsule for the vaccine and is required to deliver the part of the vaccine (DNA code to the COVID spike protein) to your immune system, which will eventually build antibodies against COVID to protect you. So, the adenovirus is like a container that your body eventually disposes of as garbage, it has nothing else to do with the COVID virus or the making of antibodies.
- 4) **Can I get J&J vaccine if I have a rheumatic disease on immunosuppressive medication, is it a “live” vaccine?** The J&J vaccine is considered non-live (it **does not** contain any live COVID virus, just a piece of DNA for the COVID virus spike protein). **You cannot catch an adenovirus from the vaccine and you cannot catch COVID virus from the vaccine.**

There are 3 available COVID vaccines currently (Moderna, Pfizer, J&J). Rheumatology patients may receive any of these, we recommend following the recommendations published by the American College of Rheumatology ([www.rheumatology.org](http://www.rheumatology.org)) around holding or timing various medications for the vaccine doses. You may also check our website [www.arthritis-mi.com](http://www.arthritis-mi.com) for more information and links.

Written by Dr. Andrew Head, endorsed by all of the team at West Michigan Rheumatology, PLLC.