COVID Vaccine Update from Maine CDC Update

Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine is expected to be approved for emergency use very soon, possibly this week. The effectiveness of the J&J vaccine is 85%. Some people are wondering if this means the J&J vaccine is less effective than the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, rated 95% effective. The short answer is No. These effectiveness numbers are not directly comparable. Here's why. The Moderna and Pfizer vaccines were studies earlier in the pandemic, before the emergence of the variants that we know are circulating now. The J&J vaccine was studied much more recently, and deliberately included large numbers of study participants in South Africa and Brazil where at least one variant wws known to be circulating. The J&J vaccine tested at 85% effective against the original SARS-CoV-2 virus AND at least one stronger variant.

There **IS** data that is directly comparable between these vaccines. Prevention of severe COVID disease, requiring ICU care, mechanical breathing support, and death is the same for all 3 vaccines, 100%. No one fully vaccinate by any of the 3 vaccines has died of COVID, or required ICU level care or mechanical breathing help. All 3 vaccines are doing exactly what vaccines are designed to do: prevent severe disease and death from SARS-CoV-2 infection.

Dr. Shah's advice to his family members? "You should get the very first vaccine that is offered to you."

Here is a different look at how the vaccines compare:

	Moderna	Pfizer	Johnson & Johnson
Number of shots needed	2	2	1
Time from first shot to full effect	42 days If shot #2 given on Day 28	35 days If shot #2 given on Day 21	21 days
Ages tested	18 +	16+	18+ Currently testing in 12-17 year olds
Effectiveness	Prevents 94% of symptomatic cases not including variants	Prevents 95% of symptomatic cases not including variants	Prevents 85% of symptomatic cases including variants
Prevention of ICU admission, Need for mechanical ventilation and death	100%	100%	100%
Storage Need	Must be shipped at -4°F, which is the temperature of a refrigerator freezer.	Must be shipped at -94°F, requires an ultra-cold freezer and dry ice.	Does not require freezing, shipped refrigerated