

Thanks, But No Thanks: Why I Haven't Gotten the Vaccine

In a recent conversation with an internist, the good doctor asked me whether I'd gotten a COVID-19 vaccine. When I told him 'No," he then asked if I intended to get it at all. "Not unless someone forces it on me," I said.

I then asked him the same question. "I got the first injection, but I think I'm skipping the second one," he replied. "I've read up on it, and the first injection is probably good enough." He then cited some statistics, and we let the subject drop.

Many people I know, young and old, have received the COVID-19 vaccine. Some are proud of that fact; others just shrug and say, "Yeah, I got the vaccine." A couple of these people were quite sick after the second injection, but most of the others showed few, if any, negative effects.

One of my acquaintances was visibly upset and angry to learn I refused to be vaccinated, which I don't quite understand. If you've been vaccinated and I've rebuffed it, and if these vaccines work, then why would my refusal anger you? You're safe, and I'm the one at risk.

A reader of *Intellectual Takeout* contacted me about a recent [article](#) I wrote regarding masks and COVID-19 and asked for my thoughts on COVID-19 vaccination. So here goes.

Despite a couple of bad habits and my age—I turned 70 in March—I am in reasonably good health. My annual physical in April revealed nothing physically amiss with me. Though it's true the vast majority of virus victims are my age or older, it's also true that many of those who died suffered from underlying conditions: obesity, diabetes, or heart or lung problems. So while I don't feel immune, I also don't feel in

danger of death should I contract the virus.

Next item: About three years ago I got a flu shot. Two days later, I woke with my left arm partially paralyzed. My doctor and a friend told me I'd probably just "slept funny" on my arm. Were they correct? The sensation of a foot or hand "falling asleep" is familiar to me, and I've felt stiff in the joints on waking many times, but never had I experienced anything like this lack of sensation and function in a limb, which lasted most of the day. That was the year I swore off flu shots.

I also spend a lot of time alone in a large house. My excursions outside of this house include trips to the coffee shop, the bookstore, and the library, and church attendance on Sunday. This life of solitude greatly lowers the odds of my exposure to COVID-19.

Now for a broader take on my refusal to join the ranks of the vaccinated.

First up is caution. Given my low chances of catching the virus—and who knows? Maybe I've already contracted COVID-19 and didn't even know it—why would I risk sickness or severe medical complications from one of these vaccines? And given my isolation, I don't really put others at risk.

Then there are the politics of the pandemic. We've gone from masks are useless to everyone needs a mask. We've imposed school closures even though we know school children are the least vulnerable to this illness. We've shuttered businesses for months with no real proof that these closures did any good.

This politics of fear continues to drive our reaction to the virus. Some colleges, for example, insist their students get vaccinated, despite all medical evidence that these young people have little chance of suffering the worst effects of the virus. Governments and private enterprises alike are

seriously discussing vaccine passports, which would allow only those who can prove they have received the injection to travel abroad or enter places of business, an insidious and fascistic plan never before employed in America.

Dan Gerlenter addresses this fear and panic in his excellent [article](#) "I'm Still Not Getting the Vaccine," writing "I've got news for you: If you spend all your time worrying about getting sick, you're sick already. America is having a giant, hysterical, hypochondriacal fit."

This confusion and irrationality about effective ways to fight the pandemic with its attendant terror increases my skepticism about the vaccines. Here's just one example: If these vaccines work, then why do those who took the needle still need to wear masks? Explain, please.

Finally, I've contemplated the worst-case scenario if I became infected, which is of course death. Were I to bite the dust because of COVID-19, some might consider me an idiot for having refused vaccination, literally dead wrong in my decision-making. Perhaps. Fortunately, I live in a country where I am still allowed to make personal choices, however foolish or wrong-headed.

For all those who have been vaccinated, good for you. I mean that. But please stop with the moral superiority, and please stop badgering and threatening the rest of us.

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