



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on November 9, 2021

COVID-19 Vaccines Don't Stop Infections for Long, but Raise Risk of Death From Breakthrough Infections: Study

The effectiveness of the various COVID-19 vaccines declines dramatically over a very short time period, according to a new study. Furthermore, while vaccinated individuals are less likely to die of COVID-19 than their unvaccinated peers, they are actually *more* likely to die of it than vaccinated persons who don't become infected, the study found.

Published Thursday in the journal [Science](#), the study, conducted by researchers from the Public Health Institute in Oakland, the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in San Francisco, and the University of Texas Health Science Center, tracked the health of 780,225 veterans from February 1 to October 1. About 500,000 of the veterans had been fully vaccinated.



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While all three vaccines were highly effective at preventing infection in March, their effectiveness plummeted over the next six months. Moderna's mRNA vaccine went from 89-percent effectiveness to 58-percent over that time period. The Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA shot's effectiveness declined from 87 percent to 43 percent. Johnson & Johnson's viral vector vaccine, meanwhile, became practically useless, falling from 86-percent effective in March to just 13-percent effective in September.

The Delta variant seems to be the biggest contributor to the vaccines' decreasing ability to prevent infections. The study authors attributed that in part to the fact that persons infected with the Delta variant had a high viral load and therefore could more readily pass the disease on to others. "Because viral load is a key determinant of transmissibility, the benefit of vaccination is less for the Delta variant compared to the earlier Alpha variant, suggesting that additional, alternative prevention practices will be essential to reduce infection," they wrote.

As *Washington Times* columnist Cheryl Chumley [observed](#), "Factor in natural immunity and a case could be made these vaccines are nearly worthless."

According to the *Science* study, that's not entirely true. "Compared to unvaccinated Veterans, those fully vaccinated had a much lower risk of death after infection," researchers reported. Veterans aged 65 and older who experienced breakthrough infections were 72 percent less likely to die than their unvaccinated peers who got infected. Younger veterans, who were already at much lower risk of death, were 82 percent less likely to die from a COVID-19 infection if they were vaccinated than if they were not. Effectiveness against death also varied by vaccine, with the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech shots providing considerably greater protection than the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Although the vaccinated fared better when it came to surviving COVID-19 than did the unvaccinated (who already have a greater-than-99-percent chance of surviving it on average), researchers found one



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disturbing trend: a “higher risk of death in vaccinated Veterans who were subsequently infected compared to those who were vaccinated but remained infection-free.” Considering how quickly the vaccines lose their effectiveness at preventing infection, this is a major drawback of accepting them. Why get a shot that will only protect you for a short time while exposing you to increased risk of death in the long run, especially if more-virulent variants continue to appear?

One other potential drawback, the study authors noted, is that “survivors of breakthrough infections may also be at risk for long COVID,” which is “a constellation of debilitating and lingering symptoms following infection” that “can lead to physiologic disruption of multiple organ systems, substantial disruption of daily life, employment, and mental health, and a higher burden on the healthcare system.”

The researchers concluded that although the “vaccines remain the most important tool to prevent infection and death,” they aren’t sufficient. They called for ongoing interventions that have proven themselves useless, such as masking and social distancing, and, more ominously, “vaccine mandates” and “passports.”

On the other hand, maybe the solution is to let individuals determine for themselves which risks they are willing to accept. Do they remain unvaccinated, knowing that, at least for the short term, they are more likely to be infected with COVID-19 and even die from it? Or do they get the shot even though it won’t protect them from infection for more than a few months and could lead to their winding up with long COVID or even dying — not to mention suffering from other, still-unknown side effects?

In short, will we have a two-tiered, command-and-control society or a free one?





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