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Health department pauses use of Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine

Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns- Today, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have agreed to pause administration of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine following several reports of adverse events. This recommendation is supported by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).

Safety of the COVID-19 vaccine is a top priority for the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD). While the adverse events associated with the Johnson & Johnson vaccine appear to be extremely rare, MMDHD is following the recommendation of the FDA and CDC to pause use of the vaccine until more is known.

All MMDHD clinics using the Johnson and Johnson vaccine have been put on hold. If the Johnson & Johnson clinics are cancelled, those with appointments will be notified in advance.

“I would like to reassure the public that MMDHD is not dependent on the Johnson & Johnson product to achieve our vaccination goals,” said Health Officer Marcus Cheatham. “If the Johnson & Johnson vaccine remains unavailable, we will continue to vaccinate using Moderna, which is not impacted by the Johnson & Johnson pause. Those wishing to get the Moderna vaccine can visit our website (www.mmdhd.org/covid-vaccine-information/) to schedule an appointment.

To date, more than 6.8 million doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine have been safely administered in the U.S. The recommendation to pause comes after six reported cases in the U.S. of a rare type of blood clot in individuals after receiving the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices is scheduled to meet Wednesday, April 14 to further review these cases and assess their potential significance. The FDA will then review the Advisory Committee’s analysis as it continues to investigate these cases. Mid-Michigan District Health Department will pause the use of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine out of an abundance of caution until the findings of the investigation have been released.

Less than one in every million Johnson & Johnson vaccine recipients have reported the rare blood clot, but those who have been vaccinated with the Johnson & Johnson vaccine within the last three weeks should be aware of the issue and watch for symptoms like a severe headache, abdominal pain, leg pain, or shortness of breath. If these symptoms develop, they should contact their health care provider.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot, and Montcalm Counties.

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