

## **COVID-19 Vaccines: Trustworthy or a Sham?**

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ENGL 1121-25

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November 12, 2023

“Vaccines cause autism!” “Vaccines have microchips!” “Vaccines magnetize you!”

You’ve most likely heard someone make one of these claims. You may even believe them yourself. I’m here to disprove some COVID-19 vaccine myths just like these. It has been circulated that vaccines are ineffective, that they contain tracking devices, that they are unsafe because they were rushed out, they have adverse side effects, and that they cause magnetism. While I understand the concerns people have regarding vaccination, most of these claims are entirely untrue. COVID vaccines are effective, tracker-free, safe, have minimal adverse side effects, and do not cause magnetism. This issue is important to me because in 2021, my mother had COVID during the Christmas season. It was depressing, we couldn’t even see her until she was better. I don’t want anyone else to go through something like that or worse.

For starters, it has been spread online that COVID vaccines are ineffective for children. This has some basis in the early versions of vaccines, newer vaccines are effective in children. In a study for *The New England Journal of Medicine*, Dr. Flor M. Muñoz et al. (2023) examined the efficacy of the BNT162b2 COVID-19 vaccine in children older than five. They found that the COVID vaccine was effective for young children. They specifically tested on children because other studies have shown vaccine effectiveness in adults, but for a long time, the age cutoff for vaccines excluded young children. This study has cases of real children receiving real vaccines and becoming stronger against COVID because of it. The study shows multiple figures to support this, such as an overall 73.2 % vaccine effectiveness rate in the children studied. This is a great success and proves that vaccines play a massive part in protecting youth from COVID.

Another myth that has been spread is the idea that COVID vaccines contain microchips intended to track people. This is entirely false. A study conducted by Sunday Oyeyemi et al. (2023) for JMIR publications found that this myth, as well as several others, has gotten to a point

of reaching and influencing healthcare workers. The study examined healthcare workers in Nigeria and found that 26.4% of the healthcare workers studied believed there was a microchip in the vaccine. This shows just how dangerous and widespread these myths are, as they even impact the very people who are supposed to be administering the vaccines. An article by Katie Tarasov (2021) for CNBC quotes Dr. Matt Laurens, saying: “That’s just not possible as far as the size that would be required for that microchip.” Dr. Laurens also goes on to say that the microchip would require both a power source and the ability to transmit a signal through at least an inch of muscle and fat, which simply isn’t possible with our current technology. This source is a little old because this claim has been disproven long ago, when COVID vaccines were still newly introduced. No scientific sources have disputed this claim since. According to journalist Ike Sriskandarajah (2021), one of the first cases of this myth catching on was when celebrity Charlamagne first theorized about it on his radio show, The Breakfast Club. Charlamagne talked about being uneasy about the vaccine, and ended up making the claim that the population would be widely vaccinated in order to be microchipped. From there, it caught on like wildfire. People were terrified of the idea that the government would always track their every move. However, something to think about is the fact that due to the cell phones many of us carry around every day, the government already has all the tools they need to track just about anybody they want. It is indeed a scary thought, but it’s less theoretical than many people think.

An additional myth that some people believe claims that the COVID vaccines are unsafe because they were “rushed out.” There is a pretty clear reason for this being untrue. According to COVID-19 Vaccine Tracker (n.d.), a large part of the reason that COVID vaccine research progressed so quickly was the years of prior research into COVID-19. Scientists have known about COVID since long before the initial outbreak in Wuhan. They’ve been studying it for years

in labs and had all that initial research to work from when creating an effective vaccine for COVID. A study by Dr. Ying-Jian Hao and their associates (2022) explain that COVID had been under study in labs before the initial outbreak. Researchers were already studying several strands of COVID, which gave vaccine researchers a valuable starting point to launch their research from. This myth is an understandable source of unease for many people, especially those who are part of marginalized groups and have been historically targeted and preyed upon by the government. However, luckily, the COVID vaccine was researched by scientists to help protect everyone from Coronavirus, and they work best if the vast majority of the population gets vaccinated. I can only hope that those who feel uneasy about the vaccine do independent research and come to their own conclusion, rather than giving in to mass hysteria and outright rejecting the vaccine.

Yet another claim many make is that of COVID vaccines having dangerous adverse side effects post-injection. This has some basis in reality but is extremely exaggerated. According to a study for *The Lancet Infectious Diseases journal* by Dr. Cristina Menni et al. (2021), Covid vaccines do have side effects, however the side effects are entirely symptomatic and amount to feeling under the weather for a few days, then returning to normal. Part of the reason for this sick feeling is the whole basis of vaccines. To simplify, vaccines essentially make you sick intentionally, but only a little bit, in order to help your system build antigens against the target virus/bacteria. This completely goes against what many have claimed online, particularly on TikTok and Twitter. People have pretended to develop seizures or Parkinson's post-vaccine, and many have opted against getting the shot due to these online videos. These videos can be horrifying, and many have rightly been scared by the content of them. Unfortunately, many of these scared individuals didn't do follow up research, which ends up putting everyone else in

greater danger of falling ill to COVID. This myth and all the others are excellent examples of why people should do independent, strong research before coming to a definite conclusion, especially when the initial claim is made by people on social media. This source is old because it came out when COVID vaccines were being introduced, but it hasn't been disputed by any reputable sources since it came out.

The last and arguably most baseless claim about COVID vaccines that I will be covering is the claim that the vaccine causes magnetism in people who get it. This claim makes no scientific sense and is completely wrong. This myth likely gained traction entirely due to mass hysteria, as a limited amount of research disproves it. There isn't a single reliable or scientific source that has proven this claim. There aren't even any scientific studies to disprove this claim because it's such a simple and common observation to see. Out of the roughly 5.55 billion people who have received the vaccination worldwide, you never see people suddenly attracting metal objects because of it. Katie Tarasov (2021) says that the viral videos showing people with magnetic arms after the shot are fake. This myth is so easily disproven that it's baffling that it gained traction in the first place. A large contributing factor to this myth catching on was a doctor essentially kickstarting it. According to Daniel Funke (2021) for USA Today, Dr. Sherri Tenpenny, who wrote a book titled "Saying No to Vaccines," testified in front of Ohio lawmakers in favor of a bill that would prevent vaccine requirements in the state, claiming that "the coronavirus spike protein that results from the vaccination has a 'metal attached to it.'" From there, people ran with the idea online and spread it across various social media echo chambers (communities filled with people of the same understanding and ideas, preventing any challenging of ideas or new ground being broken). This myth is one of the most egregious examples of misinformation spreading online and is proof of the lack of independent research many of us do.

To close out, I would like to say that writing this essay has caused me to reflect. I already didn't believe any of these conspiracy theories, however writing about them has made me even more sure than I already was. Some of these myths are somewhat plausible, such as the one about the vaccine being rushed. However, others are hard to believe, such as the magnetism and the microchips. I wanted to write about this topic because I've met many people, some of them family of mine, who believe some of these claims. Most of all, I hope that by reading this, you elect to do your own research, using reliable sources, to verify things you see online and come to your own conclusions. Everyone deserves to be informed, and we all have the tools to combat misinformation. I wrote this essay because I want to help spread the truth about COVID vaccines. They are safe for the population, and they are extremely important for our communal health and well-being. Doing your own research could save lives.

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