Vaccination Offers Higher Protection than Previous COVID-19 Infection

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In today's MMWR, a study of COVID-19 infections in Kentucky among people who were previously infected with SAR-CoV-2 shows that unvaccinated individuals are more than twice as likely to be reinfected with COVID-19 than those who were fully vaccinated after initially contracting the virus. These data further indicate that COVID-19 vaccines offer better protection than natural immunity alone and that vaccines, even after prior infection, help prevent reinfections.

"If you have had COVID-19 before, please still get vaccinated," said CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky. "This study shows you are twice as likely to get infected again if you are unvaccinated. Getting the vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and others around you, especially as the more contagious Delta variant spreads around the country."

The study of hundreds of Kentucky residents with previous infections through June 2021 found that those who were unvaccinated had 2.34 times the odds of reinfection compared with those who were fully vaccinated. The findings suggest that among people who have had COVID-19 previously, getting fully vaccinated provides additional protection against reinfection.

Additionally, a second publication from MMWR shows vaccines prevented COVID-19 related hospitalizations among the highest risk age groups. As cases, hospitalizations, and deaths rise, the data in today's MMWR reinforce that COVID-19 vaccines are the best way to prevent COVID-19.

COVID-19 vaccines remain safe and effective. They prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death. Additionally, even among the uncommon cases of COVID-19 among the fully or partially vaccinated vaccines make people more likely to have a milder and shorter illness compared to those who are unvaccinated. CDC continues to recommend everyone 12 and older get vaccinated against COVID-19.

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