



NATIONAL KIDNEY  
FOUNDATION®

30 E. 33rd Street  
New York, NY 10016

Tel 212.889.2210  
Fax 212.689.9261  
www.kidney.org

May 18, 2021

Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30333

Dear Director Walensky,

On behalf of the National Kidney Foundation and the 37 million adults in America with chronic kidney disease, including the more than 750,000 with kidney failure who require either dialysis or a kidney transplant to survive, we applaud your efforts to encourage vaccination and slow the spread of COVID-19.

We read with interest the recent [Interim Public Health Recommendations for fully vaccinated people](#). We share your desire to allow fully vaccinated individuals to “resume activities without wearing masks or physically distancing,” especially as it incentivizes more Americans to get vaccinated. However, we are concerned that the current messaging may provide a false sense of security for populations who continue to be at high risk, especially individuals who have received a solid organ transplant or individuals who rely on dialysis. We encourage you to issue additional guidance specifically directed toward immunocompromised patients regarding the need for continued masking and social distancing, even after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine.

As you may know, a recent [Johns Hopkins Medicine study](#) in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that “although two doses of a vaccine against SARS-CoV-2 — the virus that causes COVID 19 — confers some protection for people who have received solid organ transplants, it’s still not enough to enable them to dispense with masks, physical distancing and other safety measures.” In our own messaging, the National Kidney Foundation is urging transplant and dialysis patients to continue masking and practice social distancing, even if they are fully vaccinated. We also continue to convey that it is critically important that transplant and dialysis patients get a COVID-19 vaccine even if it may not be as effective as it is in the general population because it can help reduce the severity of the virus including hospitalizations and death. Finally, we emphasize that family members and care partners of kidney patients should all be vaccinated to help protect this more vulnerable population.

While we appreciate CDC’s current recommendation that “[p]eople with immunocompromising conditions, including those taking immunosuppressive medications ... should discuss the need for personal protective measures with their healthcare provider after vaccination,” we are concerned that many individuals will not appreciate their risk or will miss that recommendation. We believe that specialized guidance for this uniquely at-risk population is warranted.



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Further, we strongly encourage CDC to prioritize additional research on the effectiveness of the vaccine in immunocompromised patients and whether booster shots may offer the prospect of additional immunity from COVID-19.

We would be pleased to collaborate on additional messaging, outreach, and research opportunities. If you would like to discuss these issues in greater detail, please contact Sharon Pearce, Senior Vice President of Government Relations, at [Sharon.pearce@kidney.org](mailto:Sharon.pearce@kidney.org). Thank you for your consideration of these important issues.

Sincerely,

Kevin Longino  
CEO and transplant patient

Paul Palevsky, MD  
President