

HEALTH & WELLNESS VANDERBILT FACULTY & STAFF

The Occupational Health Clinic

Health Plus
Work/Life Connections - EAP

Connection

Providing programs that support the well-being and productivity of Vanderbilt's most valuable asset... YOU!

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Go for the Gold!

Complete All 3 Steps by October 31 to Earn up to a \$240 Wellness Credit

All 3 steps of the NEW Go for the Gold are now available! The NEW Go for the Gold is easy to navigate, quick to complete, and mobile friendly. Get started now to learn important information about your health and earn up to a \$240 Wellness Credit (for eligible faculty and staff).

STEP 1 Health Risk Assessment

STEP 2 Wellness Actions Log

STEP 3 Game Plan for Your Health Video

Log in to the Health & Wellness Information Portal (HWIP) at bit.ly/healthplusgold. Have questions? Contact Health Plus at 615.343.8943, or email health.plus@vumc.org.

2021 Game Plan for Your Health Video: Making Our Comeback with Compassion (Step 3 of Go for the Gold)

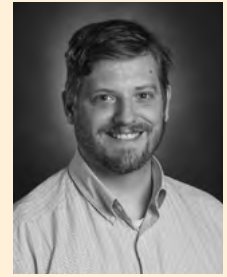
Learn from Vanderbilt experts how to cultivate compassion for yourself and others to improve your well-being *and* the well-being of all those around you. No matter what comes our way, we come back stronger when we respond with compassion.

Watch the video by logging in to the Health & Wellness Information Portal (HWIP) at bit.ly/healthplusgold.



Care Gap Alerts

Sickle Cell Disease



*Emmanuel Volanakis, MD
Assistant Professor, Pediatrics,
Hematology/Oncology*

What is sickle cell disease?

Sickle cell disease causes life-long anemia, systemic inflammation, and occasional blockage of small blood vessels. Individuals with the disease may experience a variety of acute complications including intense localized pain, stroke, lung injury, sudden worsening of anemia, or infection, among others. Chronic complications include kidney disease, a weakened immune system, damage to the lungs and heart, and chronic pain.

What causes sickle cell disease and how prevalent is it?

Sickle cell disease is caused by a mutation in the beta-globin gene (HBB) located inside red blood cells. As a result, the irregular hemoglobin, a protein found in red blood cells, damages the cell membrane and causes the cell to change shape from a flexible circle to a rigid crescent.

It is one of the most common single-gene diseases. Approximately 1 in 13 African Americans carries the genetic trait, and the disease is estimated to affect 1 in 365 African American births. Worldwide, an estimated 400,000 children are born with sickle cell disease each year.

Is there a treatment for sickle cell disease?

The only widely available cure is hematopoietic stem cell transplant, though gene therapy

(continued on page 3)

Work/Life Connections-EAP The Counselor's Corner

Janet McCutchen, LPC, CEAP
Clinical Counselor, Work-Life Connections/EAP



SUICIDE PREVENTION: A Time to ACT

We sometimes think that talking with someone about their suicidal thoughts will increase the risk of suicide. Talking can actually lower anxiety and the risk that someone will behave impulsively. Whether someone expresses **passive** suicidal ideation, which often includes vague statements about wanting to die, or they have **imminent** thoughts of suicide — including expressing a desire to die, or discussing an intention or plan — remember the acronym **ACT**.

Ask about their feelings and don't minimize them. Ask the tough questions, such as, "Do you have a plan?" "Do you feel that you could do something to hurt yourself today?"

Care: Stay with them. Listen and express concern without judgment. "I'm here for you."

Treat: Recommend professional help and develop a contact list of close family and friends to call if thoughts persist or worsen. Provide 24/7 hotlines: VPH Psychiatric Assessment Center: **615.327.7000** and TN Statewide Crisis Line: **855.274.7471**. Go to the emergency room if risk is imminent, or call 911.

If you are struggling with depression and would like to speak with a licensed professional with Work-Life Connections/EAP, call: 615.936.1327. You don't have to go through this alone. We're here for you.



Passion at Work



Sandy Bledsoe
Vice President, Risk Management
Risk & Insurance Management, VUMC

In a dynamic place like VUMC, how do you keep your team informed?

At the beginning of the pandemic when we all began working from home, we checked in via Zoom daily; now we check in at least once a week, and we have a monthly formal staff meeting. And, as difficult as it is to manage it all sometimes, email is essential, especially for time-sensitive information. We also have a weekly newsletter.

How do you build connection and community with your team?

In our regular check-in times, we try to ensure we are keeping up with personal and family happenings, both happy and challenging. We also love to celebrate holiday times with something fun. We have done some creative Zoom fun this last year! I also think it is really important to communicate the broader VUMC initiatives and activities, tying the mission to our role in it.

In what ways do you celebrate the accomplishments of others on your team?

We have had a longstanding history of giving kudos to each other — when we notice someone has gone above and beyond the call of duty or helped another team member. We also always celebrate those milestone work anniversaries; one of those traditions is to give the honoree a list of reasons we appreciate them, generated by other team members. I also always try to say "thank you" in real time.

How do you focus on your personal well-being while still managing responsibilities at work?

This is the hardest thing for me! I try to set boundaries on my work as much as I can. I also try to do some physical activity almost every day. And over this last year, I found that spending time alone writing in a journal helped me reach a good perspective on the challenges I have faced.

Sickle Cell Disease

(continued from page 1)

and gene editing technologies are in advanced clinical development. All curative therapies are resource intensive and pose significant risks. Disease modifying therapy with hydroxyurea can reduce the frequency and severity of disease complications and improve life expectancy. Some patients at high risk for severe complications benefit from regular transfusion of red blood cells.

Are there ways to reduce the symptoms of sickle cell disease?

Staying well-hydrated and avoiding common triggers such as temperature extremes, strenuous physical exertion, and smoking can help prevent vaso-occlusive events, or painful episodes in which the abnormal blood cells stick together inside blood vessels. Childhood immunization and prophylactic penicillin help reduce life-threatening infections, and health screening targeted to at-risk organs can guide specific preventive treatments.



Occupational Health Clinic talk:

Occupational Safety: How to Have a Lock on Food Safety



Shaina Farfel, MSN, APRN, FNP-C
Nurse Practitioner, Occupational Health Clinic

Promoting safe food handling and storage may not be glamorous, but it is of the utmost importance to preventing foodborne illnesses. The CDC estimates that one in six Americans are sickened by contaminated food annually; of these individuals, 128,000 are hospitalized and 3,000 die (CDC, 2018).

Below are some simple tips to keep you and your food safe:

- ✓ **A fresh start:** Before prepping food — wash your hands, wipe down surfaces, and clean utensils.
- ✓ **Well done, please:** Use a food thermometer to ensure raw meat and seafood are cooked to the proper internal temperature to kill harmful bacteria.
- ✓ **Don't mix and match:** Separate raw meat, seafood, and eggs from other foods in the fridge and during food prep to prevent the spread of germs.
- ✓ **Chill out:** Ensure adequate refrigeration of perishable foods within two hours. This is reduced to one hour, if the temperature is above 90 degrees.
- ✓ **Bag the brown bag:** Insulated, soft-sided lunch boxes with at least two ice packs are the most effective for keeping lunches cold.
- ✓ **Stay alert:** Keep up to date on current foodborne outbreaks and recalls. Check out these resources from the CDC: [cdc.gov/foodsafety/outbreaks/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/outbreaks/index.html).

Sources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018). *Burden of Foodborne Illness: Findings*.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food Safety and Inspection Service. (2016). *Keeping "Bag" Lunches Safe*.



Carpe Annum! — Seize the Year!

6 Keys to a Re-energized 2021

It's time for your fifth key action to re-energize in 2021! In the last issue, we covered the fourth key: Get Enough Sleep. In this issue, we focus on: Live with Less Stress.

6 Keys to an Energized Year!

- Eat for Energy
- Get Active
- Be Smoke-Free
- Get Enough Sleep
- **Live with Less Stress**
- Work Toward a Healthy Weight



In the heat of a stressful moment, you may need a more immediate and accessible way to cope. Consider these three tips for quick stress relief!

SQUASH YOUR STRESS

3 Tips for Quick Relief

01 Read the signs.

Your body gives you signs that signal when you feel stress. You may experience headaches, muscle tension, or become easily distracted. Pay attention to your body's cues. The quicker you can identify stress, the quicker you can squash it.

03 Make relief a habit.

It's not always easy to remember stress reducing tools in the moment. Keep practicing and experimenting until you find the right fit!

02 Awaken your senses.

Our senses are also tools. Experiment to find the right sensory technique for you!

- **Sight:** houseplants, cherished photos
- **Sound:** favorite tune, sound machine
- **Smell:** essential oils, favorite perfume/ cologne
- **Taste:** warm cup of tea, minty piece of gum
- **Touch:** soft clothing, warm blanket
- **Movement:** walk, standing breaks at work

If stress is becoming overwhelming, contact Vanderbilt Work/Life Connections-Employee Assistance Program at **615.936.1327** to schedule a free, confidential counseling appointment.

Can't-Miss Health *Plus* Activities in August and September!



Fit for Fall

Stay fit this fall with Health *Plus* Fit for Fall activities! You'll get active *and* have a chance to win prizes! Visit bit.ly/healthplusstart for activity details. *Counts as a Wellness Action for the NEW Go for the Gold.



Farmers' Market

Every Thursday from 1:30 to 5 p.m. on the Plaza through October! Visit bit.ly/healthplusfm for details.



VWell Connect

Connect with others in the Vanderbilt community around shared activity interests! Visit bit.ly/vwellconnect for details. *Counts as a Wellness Action for the NEW Go for the Gold.

Ask a Lifestyle Coach

Q How does self-talk influence my goals? How can I switch from a negative thought pattern to a more positive one?

A Everyone has negative thoughts at times. When a negative thought leads to an unhealthy behavior, it can often lead to another negative thought, beginning a spiral of self-defeat. If you have experienced this before, don't lose hope. By becoming aware of this pattern, you can take steps to reduce the frequency and impact of negative thoughts and make progress toward your goals. The main thing to remember is that you are working toward long-term change, and change doesn't happen overnight. Start by setting small, achievable goals to build your confidence. When you reach a goal, reward yourself with something other than food. Then, look back at all the progress you have made and let your focus live there. Before you know it, you will be focusing on all the good things you've done.

Below are examples of how you can stop negative thoughts and reframe them as positive thoughts.



Rachel Bowman, CHES
Health Educator, Health Plus

Reframing Negative Thinking



NEGATIVE THOUGHT

I can't believe I ate that. Now I'll never reach my goal.

I don't have the willpower.

I should have eaten less dessert.

This is too hard. I may as well forget it.

POSITIVE THOUGHT

One slip-up is not the end of the world. I can get back on track.

It's hard to change old habits, but I will try and see how it goes.

It was my choice. Next time I can decide not to eat so much.

I've learned what is hard for me and will try something different.

HEALTH PLUS NUTRITION CORNER

Learn about a different nutrition topic each month to support your health. With tips and delicious recipes, Nutrition Corner makes healthy eating simple.

August — Make Ahead Meals

September — Healthy Eating on a Budget

Enjoy this recipe from August's Nutrition Corner.

Slow Cooker Chicken Fajitas

Ingredients:

- 1 pound skinless, boneless chicken breast cut into strips
- 1 green pepper, sliced
- 1 red pepper, sliced
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 cup salsa
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 (15-ounce) can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 8 (6-inch) whole wheat tortillas
- 1 cup reduced-fat, shredded cheddar cheese

Optional toppings: avocado, plain non-fat Greek yogurt, salsa

Directions:

1. Place chicken breast strips in a slow cooker. Top with remaining ingredients except for tortillas and cheese.
2. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours or until cooked through. Shred chicken with fork.
3. Serve fajita mixture in a whole wheat tortilla topped with shredded cheese if desired.

Nutrition Information per Serving:

(1/8 recipe) Calories 250 | Total Fat 7g
Saturated Fat 2.3g | Cholesterol 40mg
Sodium 565mg | Carbohydrate 31g | Fiber 16g
Sugar 4g | Protein 28g

Log in to Nutrition Corner in August and September for these great topics and more delicious recipes. Go to bit.ly/healthplustritioncorner.

4 Things to know about your Prescription Drug Benefit

The VUMC Health Plan includes prescription drug coverage, administered by Navitus Health Solutions. Below are four things you should know to save the most money and make the most of your prescription benefit. For more information, visit hr.vumc.org/benefits/prescription.

1 Prescription drug coverage administered by Navitus

While you do not need to enroll in a separate plan for prescription drug benefits, you will receive a separate member ID card from Navitus. You may be asked to show this card when filling prescriptions. What you pay for prescriptions is based on a multi-level formulary, or list of covered drugs, which can be found at navitus.com. Aetna Plus and Aetna Select plan members will pay a copay for generic and Tier 1 drugs and coinsurance for Tier 2, 3 and specialty drugs. Health Savers plan members will pay the full amount of the prescription until your deductible is met and then you'll pay coinsurance.

2 VUMC pharmacies offer the best deal

If you use a Vanderbilt pharmacy, you could pay as little as \$1 for a 30-day prescription of generic maintenance drugs. Vanderbilt pharmacies are located at the Vanderbilt Clinic, Medical Center East, Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt, and Vanderbilt Health One Hundred Oaks. Vanderbilt pharmacies also offer a convenient refill and reminder service through a mobile app, **VanderbiltRx**. To use the app, you must have a prescription with a participating Vanderbilt pharmacy and be enrolled in My Health at Vanderbilt.



3 Free home delivery is available

VUMC health plan members can have the Vanderbilt pharmacy ship your medication(s) right to your door for no additional charge. This service is only available through Vanderbilt pharmacies. To sign up for free home delivery, visit VanderbiltRxHomeDelivery.com and click on "Prescription Request" at the bottom of the page. Once you complete the form, someone from the pharmacy will reach out to confirm your address and payment information.



4 Walgreens and other in-network pharmacies offer lower prices

Health plan members will receive the greatest savings by filling prescriptions at a Vanderbilt pharmacy. However, if the need arises to use a non-Vanderbilt pharmacy, you can fill prescriptions at Walgreens at lower rates than other non-Vanderbilt pharmacies. As our preferred partner, Walgreens offers lower copays and coinsurance rates than other non-preferred pharmacies — with the exception of mail-order and specialty pharmacy prescriptions. These services are only available through Vanderbilt pharmacies. Your costs will also be lower if you fill your prescription at an in-network pharmacy versus an out-of-network pharmacy. For a list of in-network retail pharmacies, visit navitus.com.

upcoming events



Fit for Fall Step Challenge

Go to bit.ly/healthplusstart for activity details.



Know Your Numbers

Go to bit.ly/healthpluskyn for details and digital options.



Farmers' Market

Go to bit.ly/healthplusfm for activity details.



Babies & You

Go to bit.ly/healthplusbabies for updated scheduling.



Stretch Breaks

Go to bit.ly/healthplusmindful for weekly stretch break details.



Healthier You Presents

Go to bit.ly/healthplushealthieryou to view monthly presentations.



Walking Wednesdays

Go to bit.ly/healthplusww for weekly activity details.



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Have a topic you want to see covered? Email us at health.wellness@vumc.org.

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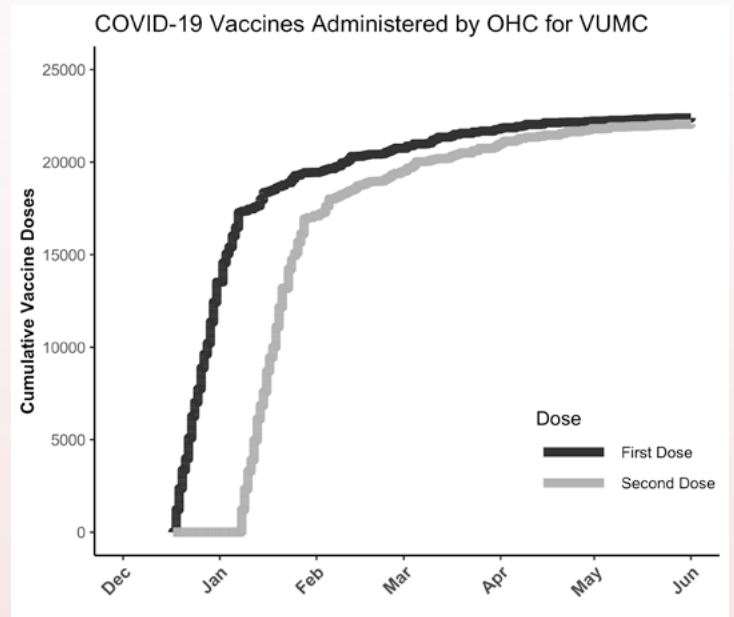
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The Healthy Pulse

FOR FACULTY AND STAFF AT VANDERBILT



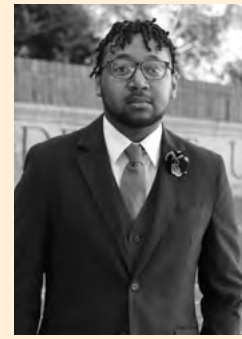
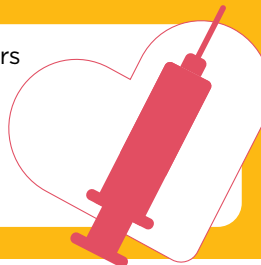
Since the COVID-19 vaccine was authorized for use in the United States in December 2020, Occupational Health Clinic has worked tirelessly to coordinate and administer the vaccine to the VUMC employee and affiliate community while following guidelines established by the Tennessee Department of Health and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. In just 6 months, 48,861 COVID-19 vaccines have been administered to VUMC employees and affiliates! 24,619 people have received dose 1 and 24,242 people have received dose 2. OHC continues to offer COVID-19 vaccinations for VUMC faculty, staff, and approved affiliates. Visit vumc.org/health-wellness/occupational-health to learn more.

Back to Normal — One arm at a time

10

Things to Know About the COVID-19 Vaccine

- ✓ The vaccine is the best and safest way to become protected against COVID-19.
- ✓ **Almost everyone** should get the vaccine. People who shouldn't get it include those who have a severe reaction to one of the ingredients in the vaccine or those who are too young to be vaccinated. Those with severe reactions to other vaccines, polyethylene glycol/polysorbate, injectable medications, or unknown substances should consult their provider first. (If you have had monoclonal antibody treatment for COVID-19 or had multisystem inflammatory syndrome after COVID-19 infection, you should wait 90 days before getting the vaccine.)
- ✓ Vaccines "teach" your body how to make antibodies against COVID-19 without having to get sick in order to learn! Our bodies remember what they've learned, so if we are exposed to COVID-19, our body can make more antibodies to protect us from getting sick!
- ✓ You CANNOT get COVID-19 infection from the vaccine.
- ✓ It takes about 2 weeks after your last shot to have maximum protection from the vaccine,
- ✓ Pfizer and Moderna are 2-shot COVID-19 vaccines, while Johnson & Johnson is 1 shot.
- ✓ Common side effects of the vaccine are fever, muscle aches, headache, feeling tired, and a sore arm. These may be more intense after the second shot.
- ✓ You should be vaccinated even if you had COVID-19 infection. We don't know how long protection after infection lasts; vaccination provides stronger and longer protection.
- ✓ You should be vaccinated even if you are low risk for significant COVID-19 illness. Even healthy people can get severe illness. Even if you get a mild case, you can still spread infection to other, vulnerable individuals.
- ✓ Studies show that the relatively small numbers of vaccinated individuals who do get a "breakthrough" COVID-19 infection are much MORE likely to have a mild (or even asymptomatic) case and appear to be LESS likely to spread infection to others.



The COVID-19 Vaccine: My "Why"

Brian Marshall, EdD, Sr. Program Manager, VUMC Office of Health Equity

As a Black man and a public health community leader, I felt it was my obligatory duty to get vaccinated. It is my mantra as a health care educator that you cannot teach a concept if you don't lead by example first. If I don't trust science, how can I educate and inspire others in my community to trust it? I also believe it's important to be transparent about the hesitations that lead to my decision to be vaccinated.

My journey of mistrust with the health care system began when I learned about the disreputable syphilis study as a student at Tuskegee University. One reason I chose to work in the field of health care education was to create spaces to bridge the gap between the structure of health care and communities most impacted by health disparities and inequities. To alleviate my mistrust in health care, I also joined the Vanderbilt Vaccine Trials Community Advisory Board. It was there where I was empowered to trust science and inspire others to do the same.

On a personal note, I made the decision to get the COVID-19 vaccine so I could LIVE and THRIVE. I was happy to celebrate my grandmother's 90th birthday this year knowing I wouldn't transfer the virus to her or any other family member. There is a level of freedom and peace I have knowing I won't spread a deadly virus to any living human being. I ultimately hope my experience being vaccinated will inspire others to trust science and help save humanity.

COVID-19 Vaccine Myth Busters: Addressing Common Misconceptions

Ana E. Nobis, MD, MPH
Assistant Professor of Clinical Medicine

A lot of information is circulating about COVID-19 vaccines, and some of it may be creating fear or confusion. Let's clear up a few common misconceptions and set the record straight about COVID-19 vaccines.

MYTH: I shouldn't get the vaccine since I'm pregnant or trying to get pregnant.

FACT: There is no evidence that the vaccine will harm your baby. Some women who participated in the studies of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines later became pregnant, and there have been no safety concerns in their pregnancies related to the vaccines. A study by the CDC confirms this: among more than 35,000 vaccinated pregnant women there were no increases in rates of adverse pregnancy outcomes such as premature delivery or stillbirth delivery. It is also especially important for pregnant women to get vaccinated as pregnant women are at increased risk of complications (such as hospitalization, premature delivery, and death) from COVID-19 infection.

MYTH: The COVID-19 vaccine will change my DNA.

FACT: The material in the vaccines does not interact with or alter your DNA. Once your cells' machinery processes the vaccine material, it breaks down and leaves your body. Also, it is important to know that you cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccines, as the vaccines do not contain the whole virus.

MYTH: The J&J vaccine will *definitely* give me blood clots.

FACT: While it is true that there have been cases of the J&J vaccine causing severe blood clots, these cases are extremely rare (about 1.9 cases in 1 million). Nearly all have been in adult women below 50 years of age. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), an independent panel of experts that advises the CDC, reviewed the data and determined that failure to use the J&J vaccine would lead to more deaths than the clotting disorder might cause. In other words, ACIP decided that the vaccine's benefits far outweigh its risk. ACIP thus recommends the use of the J&J COVID-19 vaccine for all adults, and notes that women younger than 50 years old especially should be aware of the rare but increased risk of developing serious blood clots while also understanding that there are other COVID-19 vaccines, such as the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, for which this risk has not been seen.

For answers to other commonly asked questions, please visit: bit.ly/vumcvaxfaq.



The Power of a Smile

Jim Kendall, LCSW, CEAP
Manager, Work/Life Connections-EAP

Throughout the pandemic, while we have missed physical connections with others, we have also missed the power of sharing smiles hidden by our masks. Our facial expressions are one way that we connect with others. A smile can be a boost for both the one who receives the communication and for the one who sends the greeting. Some research has shown that the act of smiling can lower stress hormones and boost your mood. It has even been credited with lowering blood pressure and boosting your immune system by decreasing cortisol in the body.

With the CDC recommendations that allow fully vaccinated people to connect in public without masks, we once again can share our smiles and connect with positive compassion and welcoming facial greetings. That is reason enough for me to get vaccinated!

DON'T MISS YOUR SHOT! How to Get the COVID-19 Vaccine:

Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 is an important step in protecting your health and the health of those around you. However, if you haven't yet been vaccinated, trying to figure out how best to go about getting your shot can be daunting. Fortunately, VUMC has made it easy to find opportunities to be vaccinated.

3 Easy Ways to Get the COVID-19 Vaccine:

1. If you are a VUMC employee, you can now walk-in for a COVID-19 vaccine in the Occupational Health Clinic on the 6th floor of the Medical Arts Building during our hours of 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday–Friday. If you walk-in, just remember that your second dose of a 2-dose series would be due 3 weeks from the first dose (for Pfizer) or 4 weeks from the first dose (for Moderna).
2. VUMC patients (employees and non-employees): Contact your PCP's office to check on their ability to provide vaccine.
3. Use vaccinefinder.org to find locations near you that provide the COVID-19 vaccine, including which brands of vaccine are available at each location.

If you get vaccinated outside of Occupational Health, please don't forget to upload a copy of your vaccine card at bit.ly/ohccovid19upload so OHC can update your record.

