

Shot in the Arm That I Sorely Needed



According to the Internet, Lady Bird Johnson once said, “Where flowers bloom, so does hope.” I say, “Where vaccines flow, so does hope.”

It is not lost on me that we are coming up on spring, a season of renewal. I recently got the COVID-19 vaccine, and it not only renewed my hope, it also gave me the peace of mind that I craved for a year. Here is my experience...

Winter doldrums stink!

It's 2021. You mean flipping the calendar to a new year didn't change our situation? That's rhetorical. While wondering whether winter or the pandemic will ever end, I also wondered whether I could even get vaccinated.

Before the National Multiple Sclerosis Society issued its [vaccine recommendations](#), my neurologist also understandably would not give a firm recommendation.

I'm the kind of person who likes to take matters into my own hands. Waiting for the recommendation, and potentially not being able to get the vaccine, was difficult for me.

I was thrilled to learn that the Society and my neurologist ultimately recommended the vaccine for those with MS. The pros definitely outweighed the cons of any apprehension for me.

I was apprehensive since I take a lot of medications, including a monthly infusion. I needed to

talk to my doctor about any potential interactions.

Will the rodent see its shadow?

It was right before Groundhog Day (fitting since each day in the past year has felt like Groundhog Day), and I found a place I could get the vaccine, as soon as those of us with pre-existing conditions qualified.

I have a relationship with a community pharmacist, so I lucked out – I feel like I won the lottery. Who cares about that groundhog?



Getting the first shot of the COVID-19 vaccine!

Six more weeks of winter

I got the first shot right around Groundhog Day... the least scientific day of the year paired with me getting a marvel of modern science. Weird? Yes.

My neurologist recommended that I get the vaccine at least two days before or after my DMT, a Tysabri infusion. Luckily I got the shot exactly two days after my infusion.

I had no reaction to the first shot. My arm was a little bit sore, but that was the only side effect I had.

By now, most know that the groundhog saw its shadow, which supposedly means we have six more weeks of winter. Fine by me. I have six more weeks before the vaccine reaches maximum efficacy.

A huge weight has been lifted after I got that vaccine. I did not realize how mentally liberating it would be. My stress level and anxiety was reduced almost immediately. I'm hopeful that the monotony and isolation of the past year are slowly going to melt, just like the snow.

Like crocuses popping through the ground signaling the first sign of spring, I made appointments for some much-needed renewal to get my hair cut and teeth cleaned for the first time in a year. The appointments aren't until I am fully vaccinated, but I'm so looking forward to it.

Spring has sprung... at least in my mind

I got the second shot, this time three days after my infusion. It's definitely still winter here, but the snow is melting, literally and figuratively.

Once again, the only side effect I had was a bit of a sore arm.

I did take acetaminophen after the shot, per my mom's advice. I was told to absolutely not take it before the shot.

According to the pharmacist, it's best to wait a couple of weeks to reenter society after getting the second vaccine so that you have maximum efficacy. No problem. I've waited one year. What's a couple more weeks?

I decorated for spring and am making plans with vaccinated family for the spring! Now, it's time to get on with life.



The second dose.

Some parting thoughts...

Getting vaccinated was an emotional experience for me, and I was extremely fortunate that I had no friends or family die from the virus. I can't imagine how emotional it would be for those millions who did. My heart aches for those people.

I know many are struggling to sign up for the vaccine. I'm able, so I have reached out to those I know who may be struggling with the technology, especially, to see if I can help get them signed up to be vaccinated. I feel that's the least I can do to pay it forward to an

individual and for the public health.

The pandemic really made me thankful for what I have. As we all do, sometimes I focus on the things that were taken away from me with MS. I realize how much I have. And not that I didn't know this before, but the pandemic really showed me just how resilient and strong I am.

It's also made me extremely thankful for modern science.

Editor's Note: For complete vaccine recommendations, [visit the Society website](#) or watch the February 19, 2021 episode of [Ask an MS Expert](#) (below).