

**Dr. Belinda Alexander**

I was finding my patients were dying and my patients range from age 30 to 70, and this is in December and January. And I felt that in order for me to reach a greater number of people to actually go on live television and show my patients and my community that Dr. Alexander is going to take her shot. And I know that it's safe. But I knew that they can follow along and see my response to the vaccine. And the response from that when my patients have been, "Because you got on TV and shows that it's safe, we trust you, so we're going to follow what you do."

In the past year we have had over 500,000 deaths due to COVID. When you look at those numbers and also look at what's going on in Mississippi, we've had about 6,000 deaths in Mississippi. It's very important to have something available to protect us, so we have again, a vaccine to prevent you from developing the disease.

The most common side effect that's seen is swelling of the arm, and the swelling may last for 24 to 36 hours. Millions of individuals have received the vaccine. You may have some swelling, or you may have one day of feeling down, as if you have the flu. Well, that's just one day, but if you actually contracted COVID-19, the disease, you may have something that ranks from no symptoms to feeling bad for a day or two, or cough, pneumonia, which may lead to shortness of breath, which may lead further to hospitalization, and unfortunately can cause death.

So getting a vaccine will at least prevent you from being on that road. I respond to my patients who said, "Okay, I'm scared of this vaccine, because I heard it gives me Corona virus." That's not true. The vaccine is introduced into your system to alert your own antibodies, to build up and know, "Hey, if you see something foreign like this enter, we need to fight."

Millions of people nationwide have received the vaccine. Millions of people in this state have received the vaccine and have not had any significant complications. So I look at it as this, do you want to go outside in the rain with nothing covering yourself and get wet? Or do you want to go outside with an umbrella? So when you go to work you have safety goggles, safety mask, you have a hard hat. Would you go into a hazardous area that things can be dropping without that hat on? If you went in without a hard hat and something falls or something comes your way, what's the risk of you being harmed? Well, that's what I'm look at it with vaccines. It's lowering your risk of getting infected and it's protecting you from severe harm.

In Mississippi about 20 to 25% of our population have received the vaccine. I would like for us to go forth and let's push that to 100%. Remember that we're on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, we cannot control those who are out of state, coming to our state, because we are a tourist industry on the coast. So you cannot control those individuals who may not be safe or may not have known that they're exposed. So please wear your mask, please get your vaccine, and also stay safe.