

## BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



### Brain Health Matters and Vaccines Makes a Difference

*The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health, optimizing brain performance, and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Today, we are looking at the facts about the COVID-19 vaccines.*

Millions of dollars have been spent on developing a vaccine to prevent COVID-19. And while time has seemed to slow to a crawl for those of us struggling to adapt in this pandemic environment, these potential vaccines have reached the approval stage in record time. As we enter month 10 of the pandemic, many of us are wondering what could a COVID-19 vaccine mean for our physical and brain health?

A study by Harvard Medical School researchers suggests the success of a COVID-19 vaccine depends on a number of factors including: how effective it is in preventing the virus; how fast and widely it can be delivered; our willingness to be immunized; and the severity of the pandemic when the vaccine is finally available.

In a recent interview with [The Harvard Gazette](#), Public Health Professor Dr. Barry Bloom, from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, offered some context about the vaccines currently available. He said these vaccines look to be relatively safe and offer a high level of protection from the COVID-19 virus, but there is still a great deal of research to be done.

He referred to the current vaccines as a “terrific start”, but emphasized that we need to continue to take precautions to prevent the spread and protect ourselves from exposure to the virus for some time.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has recommended that front-line health care personnel and residents of long-term care facilities be included in the first phase of those receiving the vaccine, followed by essential

workers, then those with high-risk medical conditions, and adults over the age of 65. That means it could take several months before a majority of people have been vaccinated.

“We will need to wear masks, we will need to be protective, even though we have vaccines, until a high proportion of people are immune,” Dr. Bloom said.

While we still need to practice safety measures that prevent the spread of the virus, there is hope on the horizon. And hope can certainly help reduce our current stress levels around COVID-19.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO *BOOST* YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Here are some suggestions from the BHI for continuing to protect yourself and other from COVID-19. Research shows the vaccines will be most effective if the infection rate is kept under control prior to their release.

- **Wear a mask.** Wearing a mask is still the best way to prevent the virus from spreading. Your mask should cover both your mouth and your nose. Choose a mask with at least two layers and wash in regularly.

- **Wash your hands.** Use soap and water or a hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol.

- **Avoid crowds.** Even if there is an approved vaccine, avoid risky behavior until most of the population has been vaccinated. Try to stay at least 6-feet away from people outside your household.

- **Clean and disinfect,** especially frequently used surfaces in shared spaces.

- **Adopt a Brain Healthy Lifestyle,** including thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses, and language that promote:

- Stress resilience
- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Sleep
- Social connection
- Emotion
- al wellbeing
- Meaning and Purpose
- Cognitive stimulation and creativity
- Engaging with nature
- General health
- Positive impacts

### **About the Brain Health Initiative ([www.brainhealthinitiative.org](http://www.brainhealthinitiative.org))**

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is a cutting-edge, new approach to protecting brain health, optimizing brain performance, and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI works collaboratively with Massachusetts General Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital, and the Academy for Brain Health and Performance to build brain healthy communities

through education, collaboration, research, innovation, and action, with a specific focus on *brain health promotion, prevention, early detection, evidence-based intervention and optimization of performance*. The BHI is creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the brain health movement, ***because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference***. To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).