CDC Statement on Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS)

COVID-19 vaccine safety is a top priority for the federal government, and we take all reports of health problems following COVID-19 vaccination very seriously. CDC and FDA are monitoring reports of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) after receiving Johnson & Johnson's Janssen (J&J/Janssen) COVID-19 Vaccine. GBS is a neurological disorder in which the body's immune system damages nerve cells, causing muscle weakness or in the most severe cases paralysis. Each year in the United States, an estimated 3,000 to 6,000 people develop GBS; it is typically triggered by a respiratory or gastrointestinal infection. Most people fully recover from GBS.

Reports of GBS after receipt of the J&J/Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine in the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) are rare, but do likely indicate a small possible risk of this side effect following this vaccine. Around 100 preliminary reports of GBS have been detected in VAERS after 12.8 million doses of J&J/Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine administered. These cases have largely been reported about two weeks after vaccination and mostly in males, many aged 50 years and older. Available data do not show a similar pattern with mRNA vaccines (Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna), after over 321 million doses administered in the United States. This issue will be discussed as part of an upcoming ACIP meeting.

In the United States, nearly all COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths are now occurring in unvaccinated people. The risk of severe adverse events after COVID-19 vaccination remains rare. Everyone age 12 years and older is recommended to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.