

Protocol for Deaths occurring after COVID-19 Vaccination

Scene Investigative Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date/time of vaccination? • What type of vaccine (manufacturer, dose #1 or 2, lot #?) • Facility where vaccine administered? • Body site including right or left where vaccine was injected. • Date/time of symptom onset? • Specify symptoms experienced (e.g., local reactions, systemic symptoms, cough, sore throat/ILI, rash/urticaria, wheezing, stridor, angioedema, shortness of breath, chest pain) • Any other recent vaccinations? • History of adverse events after other vaccinations? Describe. • Specify all current medications (including herbal & dietary supplements?) • Specify any known allergies • Specify other comorbidities. • Recent history of COVID-19? Describe. • Describe any laboratory testing results • Occupation/indication for receiving COVID-19 vaccine • Describe any other pertinent exposure history (e.g., recent trauma, surgery, hospitalization, travel, sick contacts)
Case Triage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As resources and jurisdiction allow, autopsy should be considered for deaths occurring after COVID-19 vaccination. The following are some broad guidelines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Most anaphylactic events attributable to vaccination occur within minutes to hours: thus, individuals expiring suddenly post-vaccination (i.e. within 24 hours) should be prioritized for autopsy ○ Individuals should be prioritized for autopsy if there is no readily obvious and plausible explanation for cause of death OR there are new onset signs/symptoms not fully explained by underlying conditions (i.e. within a year of vaccination) ○ Individuals with suspected COVID-19 should be prioritized for autopsy. For more information, see: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-postmortem-specimens.html
Autopsy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform full autopsy (preferably including brain and spinal cord) • Perform thorough histologic sampling to evaluate for cause of death; including collection of lung and upper airway tissues if COVID-19 is suspected • Carefully assess for findings consistent with anaphylaxis, i.e. laryngeal edema, pulmonary hyperinflation, mucus plugging of airways, tissue eosinophilia • Carefully examine the vaccine injection site for evidence of inflammation/infection
Ancillary Testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In cases of suspected anaphylaxis, consider serum tryptase, serum IgE analysis • Consider freezing serum or tissue • Toxicologic analysis • COVID-19 PCR • Routine postmortem microbiologic and other infectious disease testing, as indicated by gross findings and clinical history • Request antemortem laboratory specimens, if available • Other tests as appropriate for diagnoses under consideration
Death certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When completing the death certificate, if it is the opinion of the medical certifier that the vaccine caused death, the vaccine and its fatal complications should be reported in the proper sequence in Part 1.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the vaccine is determined to be a significant contributing factor, it should be reported in Part 2. • If it is determined that the vaccine is not a cause or contributing factor to death, it should not be reported on the death certificate. • More information on cause of death certification can be found in the Handbooks for Death Registration (https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/handbooks-and-guides.htm).
VAERS Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ME/C are strongly encouraged to report deaths occurring after COVID-19 vaccine administration, irrespective of attribution to vaccination, to VAERS** online at: https://vaers.hhs.gov/reportevent.html • If assistance with reporting to VAERS is needed, email info@VAERS.org or call 1-800-822-7967
Other Public Health Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ME/C should consult with their state or local health department to determine if there are any other jurisdiction-specific public health reporting or investigative preferences or requirements. A health department directory is located here: https://www.cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/healthdirectories/index.html

**VAERS=Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System