



Virginia Drivers With No DUIs Getting a Pay Day On Saturday

There have been studies to

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You had COVID-19. Should you get vaccinated? Rand Paul says no. Scientists say yes.



Andrew Romano · West Coast Correspondent
Tue, May 25, 2021, 2:17 PM · 6 min read



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was a practicing ophthalmologist. So when the doctor turned Republican lawmaker recently announced that he would not be getting vaccinated for COVID-19 because he already has “natural immunity,” some Americans may have assumed he was following the science.

He wasn't.

“Until they show me evidence that people who have already had the infection are dying in large numbers or being hospitalized or getting very sick,” Paul told radio host John Catsimatidis, “I just made my own personal decision that I’m not getting vaccinated because I’ve already had the disease and I have natural immunity.”



Sen. Rand Paul at a Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee hearing on the federal response to COVID-19 on May 11. (Jim Lo Scalzo/AFP via Getty Images)

In March 2020, Paul was the first U.S. senator to test positive for the coronavirus. Yet the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization both say prior infection is no reason to refuse vaccination.

“It’s very important for people who have had COVID-19 in any form to get the COVID-19 vaccine shots,” explains Yahoo News Medical Contributor Dr. Kavita Patel, a primary care physician in Washington, D.C., who also serves as a health policy fellow at the Brookings Institution. “One, it



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protects them as individuals from getting reinfected or infected with a new variant, which we know can happen. Two, it also helps us as a society get closer to that population or herd level of immunity where we just don't have any cases, or as close to zero as possible."

Paul is hardly alone in thinking a prior infection makes vaccination redundant. According to a Yahoo News/YouGov poll conducted earlier this month, 7 percent of unvaccinated U.S. adults say the fact they "already had COVID-19" is the "most important reason" they haven't gotten vaccinated

She Was A Star, Now She Works In Virginia

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Raleigh News and Observer





yet. That’s the equivalent of more than 7 million people.

But 7 million Americans (and at least one physician-politician) can be mistaken — and so far, the science suggests they are.

The problem isn’t so much, as Paul put it, that “people who have already had the infection are dying in large numbers or being hospitalized or getting very sick” because they remain unvaccinated. It’s clear that prior infection confers some degree of immunity.



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A person on a gurney is transported to Elmhurst Hospital Center on March 2 in New York City. (Angela Weiss/AFP via Getty Images)

The problem is that experts don't know exactly how much immunity prior infection confers, or how long that immunity lasts.

Miami Herald



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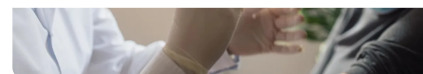




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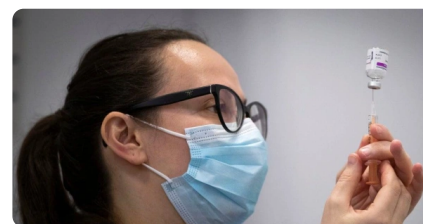


“In some cases, immunity [from a COVID infection] doesn’t even last six months,” says Patel, citing studies that suggest people who experienced asymptomatic infections (like Paul) go on to lose their SARS-CoV-2-specific antibodies more often and rapidly than symptomatic patients. Another recent study published in the Lancet, meanwhile, has suggested that age could be a factor as well, with prior infection giving those under the age of 65 years around 80 percent protection against reinfection versus just 47 percent for those over 65. Paul is 58.



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The Independent

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Then there are virus variants to consider. “[Researchers] take people’s blood who have been infected, and they take their antibodies and try to test them against [newer] variants,” Patel continues. “Sometimes it doesn’t work, which means that even a previously infected person could still be susceptible to what we would call a second infection or a reinfection.”

In contrast, researchers already know that immunity from the approved COVID-19 vaccines [lasts longer than six months](#) — likely between a year and several years. Study after study has also



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The Wall Street Journal



antibodies that can attach to lots of different receptors on that [coronavirus] spike protein. That is important because as new variants that we don't even know about crop up, being able to have antibodies that can attack those spike proteins on a new variant is incredibly valuable."



Dr. Kavita Patel in Creve Coeur, Mo., in 2017. (Jeff Roberson/AP)

Overall, [more than 15 studies](#) have shown that even a single dose of COVID-19 vaccine for people who already had the disease provides superior immune protection than natural immunity; [some have even suggested](#) that one dose for people with prior COVID offers stronger immunity than two doses for people who were never infected.

In other words, both infection and vaccination provide immunity. But right now researchers are certain that vaccination-induced immunity is both comprehensive and long-lasting for pretty much everyone who gets jabbed. They can't say the same about natural immunity. As a result, it is safer for previously infected individuals to get vaccinated (which carries no real risk) than to rely on natural immunity for long-term protection from COVID-19.

The same is true beyond the individual level as well. The latest data suggests that the COVID-19 vaccines [not only reduce symptoms and serious illness but infection itself](#) — which in turn



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infection on viral spread, says Patel. But we don't. So again, getting vaccinated is a surer, safer way of "breaking the ability of the virus to infect [other] people" and ending the pandemic.

"Even if you were infected, getting a vaccine doesn't just help you," explains Patel. "It helps the people around you as well."

Whether this argument carries weight with Americans such as Rand Paul remains to be seen. In March of last year, Paul [continued to go to work at the U.S. Capitol for six days](#) after testing positive, potentially exposing his colleagues to the virus. And last week he justified his refusal to get vaccinated by mischaracterizing CDC recommendations as Orwellian diktats and trumpeting the same notions of personal freedom that inform his libertarian politics.



A health care worker prepares Moderna COVID-19 vaccine doses at a clinic in Immokalee, Fla., on Thursday. (Joe Raedle/Getty Images)

"In a free country, you would think people would honor the idea that each individual would get to make the medical decision, that it wouldn't be a Big Brother coming to tell me what I have to do," Paul said. "Are they also going to tell me I can't have a cheeseburger for lunch? Are they going to tell me that I have to eat carrots only and cut my calories? All that would probably be good for me, but I don't think Big Brother ought to tell me to do



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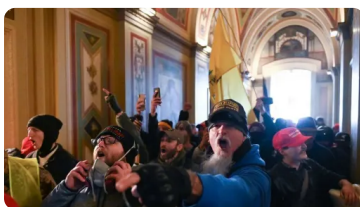


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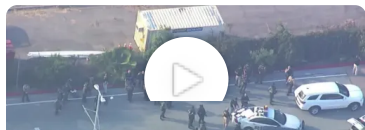


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