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## **My Experience with COVID-19**

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Like many, I didn't think COVID would happen to me. I'm vaccinated, been cautious for over a year, and met or exceeded the guidelines everywhere I have been.

I returned from a trip to Las Vegas and had a slight cough. I didn't think much of the cough and thought it probably had more to do with being in 113F weather and dry air for a week. My wife encouraged me to get tested. I agreed out of an abundance of caution and concern for my most vulnerable family members. I took the test, returned home, and took a short nap. When I woke up, the cough had progressed from a slight irritation in the top of my throat to a very heavy, deep, and burning cough in the bottom of my lungs. I became feverish and greatly concerned about the severity and speed of the onset of symptoms. I closed my bedroom door and began the 36-hour wait for my test results and what would ultimately be 11 days of isolation, discomfort, and concern as a COVID positive case.

While it is not that common to get COVID after being vaccinated, a small percentage of people that are fully vaccinated will still develop COVID-19. My road was a bit tougher than most, yet I'm thankful knowing that my case could have been much worse had I not been vaccinated. I had many of the usual symptoms including cough, fever, headaches, body pains and loss of taste and smell. I would feel better at times as symptoms subsided and then have severe coughing fits. I would cough until I was gasping for breath or vomiting. On day eight, I felt like I was finally improving. However, that evening I had the worst coughing fit that I have ever had. My lungs were burning, and I was trying to get breaths in between coughs. I coughed until the muscles along both sides of my neck cramped. It was scary, painful and unlike anything I have experienced. All the while, my wife was on the other side of the wall listening and unable to do much to help.

After that episode, I decided to go to the hospital. What should have been an easy decision became tough. I knew my loved ones had to drop me off at the door and leave me behind. The isolation while being sick was one of most challenging parts of COVID. Knowing that my wife was on the other side of the house provided comfort but was also one of my biggest fears. What if I get her sick? What if her situation is worse than mine?

My experience has ranged from unpleasant and uncomfortable to scary. Breakthrough cases are rare, but they are happening, and unvaccinated cases are increasing at an alarming rate in our community and around the country. We all have decisions to make regarding our individual



health and well-being. Our decisions impact our families, friends and even those that we do not know.

It is my hope that sharing my experience will inform people that the risks are real and that we must remain vigilant. As we continue to push to return to some sense of normalcy, it is imperative that we remain proactive in addressing this issue.

Let's work together to mitigate the risks of COVID for our families, friends, and communities. Be safe, get vaccinated!

*Community First serves as a neutral forum for the community to come together and as a catalyst for solutions to improve health and lower medical costs on Hawaii Island.*