

# The vaccine, COVID and other lies of Green Bay quarterback Aaron Rodgers

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Last Wednesday it was announced that Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers, the National Football League's (NFL) reigning Most Valuable Player, tested positive for the coronavirus and was ineligible to play in yesterday's game at the Kansas City Chiefs. Per NFL COVID protocols, unvaccinated players like Rodgers who test positive are required to remain in isolation for at least 10 days.

The NFL, in an agreement with the NFL Players Association, has not mandated that players be vaccinated, but has instead set forth protocols that place greater restrictions on unvaccinated players. These restrictions include daily testing, mask wearing other than when on the field, five-day quarantining if in contact with anyone testing positive, and a minimum 10-day quarantining if a player tests positive.

There are also a number of other restrictions regarding team travel and social distancing measures, including prohibiting unvaccinated players from gathering in groups of more than three team-affiliated individuals outside the team facility.

The restrictions on vaccinated players are much less stringent, designed to encourage players to be vaccinated. As a consequence, 95 percent of all NFL players are vaccinated, as well as 100 percent of team and league staff.

Under this agreement the NFL and its teams cannot reveal the vaccination status of any player. By late summer, as the season was about to begin, however, the press began asking players directly about their vaccination status. Many players volunteered they had been vaccinated and encouraged others to do the same, while others refused to answer, saying it was a personal or private matter. A few players, however, did reveal they were not vaccinated and were opposed to doing so for various "health" or personal reasons.

In late August during a press conference Rodgers was asked whether he had been vaccinated and he responded by saying, "Yeah, I've been immunized." This response was reasonably understood to mean Rodgers had been vaccinated and the public was led to believe that was the case.

When Rodgers tested positive last week and was placed by the NFL on a 10-day quarantine status, it became clear he had not been vaccinated, because if he had been, he would have been eligible to return after two negative tests at least 24 hours apart.

On Friday, in an attempt to quell the public outrage over his earlier deceitful and misleading claim of being vaccinated, Rodgers appeared on the Pat McAfee radio show to assert that he did not "lie" when he said he was "immunized" and there was a "witch-hunt" going on in the media over who was unvaccinated.

Rodgers denied being "anti-vaxx" or a "flat-earther" but said that he has "an allergy to an ingredient that's in the mRNA vaccines." He added he also had rejected the Johnson & Johnson vaccine over his concerns about what he had considered to be the risk of serious side effects. He claimed that he "found a long-term immunization protocol to protect myself & I'm very proud of the research that went into that." Rodgers did not disclose or describe his "immunization protocol."

Rodgers further claimed that he followed all of the required protocols for unvaccinated players with the exception of not wearing a mask during required press conferences. "I think some of the rules, to me, are not based in science at all. They're based purely in trying to out and shame people. Like needing to wear a mask at a podium when every person in the room is vaccinated and wearing a mask makes no sense to me. If you got vaccinated to protect yourself from a virus that I don't have as an unvaccinated individual, then

why are you worried about anything I can give you?”

Rodgers conveniently left out that vaccinated players do not have to wear a mask at most press conferences, but unvaccinated players are required to do so. By not wearing one Rodgers continued to pretend to the press, and hence the public, that he had been vaccinated.

From a health perspective, which Rodgers apparently rejects, an unvaccinated player could have been infected after his daily test, or that a recent infection may not yet have been detected by his latest test. Moreover, the vaccinated people in the press room could be asymptomatic and infect an unvaccinated player like himself.

Lastly, on Halloween, various photos were taken of Rodgers without a mask at a party with a large group of people, including several players, in violation of the NFL’s protocol prohibiting an unvaccinated player being with more than three team-affiliated members outside of the team facility.

Rodgers in his interview went on to describe how he has mild symptoms and is now using monoclonal antibodies as well as a litany of bogus cures and treatments advocated by the far-right, which include, “ivermectin, zinc, vitamin C and HCQ and I feel pretty incredible.” He went on to thank libertarian podcaster Joe Rogan, who is well known for his use and promotion of ivermectin.

Ivermectin is a well-established veterinary medicine used to treat some human maladies, like parasites and scabies, but has not been approved as a treatment for any sort of viral infection. It has not been proven to treat COVID-19, despite promotion by ultra-right media.

HCQ is the abbreviation for hydroxychloroquine which early in the pandemic was promoted by Trump and other spokesmen for the far right as an effective treatment for COVID-19 but has been repeatedly shown by health researchers to be ineffective.

Treatments with monoclonal antibodies, which have a limited availability and cost about \$2,000 dollars compared to a \$20 dollar cost for a vaccine, may help in treating COVID-19 if administered at an early stage of the infection.

In a bizarre effort to justify his deceitful “been immunized” statement, Rodgers cited Martin Luther King, Jr., declaring, “The great MLK said you have a moral obligation to object to unjust rules, and rules that

make no sense.” What King actually said was, “One has not only a legal, but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws.”

It is of course preposterous to compare a history-making civil rights leader to a profoundly ignorant, if not downright reactionary, sports multi-millionaire, who happens to be highly skilled at throwing an inflated pigskin through the air.

Rodgers is one of the world’s highest paid athletes, having earned well over \$120 million during his 17-year NFL career. In 2018 he signed a four-year, \$134 million contract extension. In addition, he earns about \$9 million annually in endorsements from the following companies: State Farm Insurance, Pizza Hut, Adidas, Prevea Healthcare, Bergstrom Automotive, Sharpie, and IZOD.

In early August, a few weeks prior to Rodgers giving his “I have been immunized” statement, Minnesota Vikings quarterback Kirk Cousins had announced that he refused to be vaccinated. Cousins’s announcement resulted in the termination of the partnership he had with the Sports Medicine Department of Holland Hospital in his hometown of Holland, Michigan.

How much endorsement considerations influenced Rodgers’ decision to cover up his refusal to be vaccinated remains to be seen, but on Saturday Prevea Healthcare announced it was terminating its partnership with him.



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