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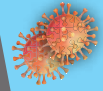
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Have you or a loved one become seriously ill from exposure to COVID-19 on the job? We are currently accepting COVID-19 cases of workers employed in certain occupations where currently proposed laws in both Virginia and North Carolina would classify COVID-19 illness as an occupational disease. See inside for more details!



Could a Llama Save Us From COVID-19? Meet Winter, a 4-Legged Hero of Vaccine Research

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, people have turned to their four-legged friends for help and comfort. In Nebraska, an 11-year-old girl and her pony, Peanut, cheered up nursing home residents through their windows this spring, while in Pennsylvania, an award-winning golden retriever named Jackson starred in videos that kept thousands laughing. Pets like these have given the national mood a boost, but another four-legged critter deserves just as much recognition. Her name is Winter, and she's the 4-year-old llama whose antibodies could help us beat the coronavirus.



At this point, you're probably thinking, "Llamas? Really? What will these scientists think up next?" But in fact, Winter wasn't an outside-of-the-box discovery during the COVID-19 vaccine scramble. Llamas have been helping scientists battle viruses for years. That's because, along with her fuzzy brown coat and long eyelashes, Winter has a unique virus treatment hidden in her blood: llama antibodies.

According to The New York Times, Winter has participated in past studies for both SARS and MERS — diseases also caused by

coronaviruses — and her antibodies fought off both infections. Llamas have also helped out with research for HIV and influenza. It turns out llama antibodies are smaller than the ones found in humans, which makes it easier for them to wiggle into the tiny pockets in virus-carrying proteins. This superpower gives them the ability to "neutralize" viruses, including COVID-19. Studies are now showing that using these llama antibodies in humans could potentially keep coronaviruses from entering human cells as well.

At least two separate llama studies have shown the effectiveness of these antibodies on coronavirus infections. This summer, a team of researchers from the U.K. discovered that llama antibodies "have the potential to be used in a similar way to convalescent serum, effectively stopping progression of the virus in patients who are ill" when given to those patients in a transfusion. They also suggested that a cocktail of llama and human antibodies could be even more successful at temporarily blocking the virus.

Studies of the latter are in the works, and scientists around the world have their fingers crossed for success. In the meantime, Winter will continue peacefully grazing in Belgium, unaware that she just might play a role in saving the world.



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DON'T FILE YOUR COVID-19 WORKERS' COMP CLAIM YET 2 State Bills That May Change Your Outcome

If you've gotten COVID-19 in the past several months and are considering filing a workers' compensation claim, we recommend that you do NOT file just yet — at time of writing, there are two bills being considered in Virginia and North Carolina that could change workers' compensation and make it far more likely that you'll obtain an award or have an accepted claim.

If you file your workers' comp claim now, it's very likely you'll get denied. COVID-19, under our current laws, is considered an "ordinary disease of life," and to prove it came from work, you will fight an uphill battle. Under the proposed laws, if you work in certain industries, you would be entitled to a presumption that your COVID-19 illness occurred at work. In other words, it would be considered an occupational disease.

Though employers have reported a little over 5,700 cases of COVID-19 for their employees in Virginia to date, employees themselves have only filed 481 workers' comp claims for COVID-19. Out of the 481 cases, only about a quarter have gone to hearing, and out of those, more than half were denied, meaning the case was dismissed without any benefits being awarded.

Of course, we don't know exactly how sick those 5,700 employees were. Just like any other injury, employers were legally required to report instances of COVID-19 among their employees. Did that mean the employee called in sick or merely tested positive? Either way, it's a tough uphill battle for workers to prove they got sick at work, no matter how certain they may be. The good news is that legislators in both Virginia and North Carolina are now advocating to change that through a Virginia Bill known as Senate Bill 5066 and a North Carolina Bill known as House Bill 1057.

Essentially, these two bills will change workers' comp for several groups of people — including first responders and all health care workers, such as nurses, EMTs, firefighters, and even chiropractors — giving them the legal presumption that COVID-19 is an occupational disease. This is a huge change! It would shift responsibility to the defense, who would then have to prove that workers contracted the illness from somewhere outside of work, such as from attending a weekend party or being caught repeatedly without a mask without social distancing.

There are slight, but important, differences between the two bills being considered in Virginia and North Carolina. Here's what to keep in mind.

Virginia's Senate Bill 5066

In Virginia, the bill will apply to any firefighter, law enforcement officer, first responder, or health care provider. The best part is that **this bill will be retroactive to Jan. 1, 2020**. This means that anyone in the Commonwealth who got sick from COVID-19 on the job and who is in one of these listed occupations would be wise to wait until this bill hopefully passes in the Virginia legislature before filing his or her workers' comp claim with the Commission. As of right now, workers in these categories will have a difficult time obtaining an award due to the higher standards of proof required under the current laws.

North Carolina's House Bill 1057

In North Carolina, the bill will apply to a broader range of professionals on the front lines, including grocery store workers. It includes law enforcement, jailers, prison guards, firefighters, EMTs, paramedics, health care workers, and employees required to work during a pandemic for any business declared essential by executive order of the

governor. It will also apply to pandemics in the future, not just COVID-19. However, unlike Virginia's version, the bill will not be fully retroactive and will only apply to cases filed after it is hopefully passed into law.

I've always felt that one of the highest priorities of the law is to protect the people who are trying to protect us, especially those heroes out there treating patients suffering from COVID-19. It's a relief that our state governments are finally doing what's necessary to protect them. Several other states have already passed such legislation, or it is currently under consideration.

If you currently plan to file a workers' comp claim, call me before you do so. The law is constantly changing, and it's possible that, by the time you receive this newsletter, the proposed bill has changed, passed, or failed to pass. As someone who is paying close attention to these changes, we want to ensure that your claim has the best possible chance of success.

Whether you are affected by these changes or not, we urge you to please call or email your local state representative in Virginia or North Carolina and express your support for these bills. We can't allow our society's heroes to be left without legal protection if they contract COVID-19 or any other pandemic disease while they are looking out for us. Workers' compensation can save them hundreds of thousands of dollars and provide a lifeline of income when they need it most, or at least provide some measure of financial security to their loved ones in the event they tragically die from this terrible illness. They should certainly enjoy the same rights as any other injured worker.

-Joseph Miller

If you belong to a union or other labor-related group and want to schedule my presentation at your group's speaking arrangement, you can do so by calling 888-667-8295. The presentation is free of charge, offers important information for taking appropriate action in Virginia workers' compensation cases, and everyone in attendance gets a free copy of my book, "10 Traps and Lies That Can Ruin Your Virginia Workers' Compensation Case." Education is the best way to protect yourself from making a mistake. Call now, before it's too late.

3 GREAT APPS

to Maintain Your Mental Health at Home



When you lead a busy lifestyle, mental health often takes a back seat to other pressing matters. Thankfully, there are a number of easy-to-use apps to help address this concern. Even if you're pressed for time, these apps can help you maintain your mental health. And if you're just looking for some simple resources to guide you through mood-boosting exercises, they've got you covered there too.

Moodfit (GetMoodfit.com) Think of this app as a fitness tracker for your mind. The mood tracker allows you to record your moods and thoughts and follow trends and changes over time. You can look at these trends yourself or set the app to monitor specific areas of your mood. This highly customizable app is packed with tools and resources to help you with your mental health. In addition to the mood tracker, Moodfit offers a range of breathing exercises and a guide to mindfulness meditation.

MoodMission (MoodMission.com) If you're struggling with mental health issues, like anxiety and depression, you may feel like this free, evidence-based app was designed just for you. MoodMission asks you a series of questions to assess how you're feeling, then suggests a series of "missions" you can complete to help you get into a better state of mind. Missions are short, achievable tasks, like taking a walk around the block or cleaning up a room in your home. Of course, like all the apps listed here, it is not a replacement for professional mental health care, but it offers evidence-based exercises and a level of support that's not often found in smartphone apps.

Talkspace (Talkspace.com) While this app contains a number of mental health tools, its primary purpose is to connect you quickly with one of the company's thousands of licensed and experienced therapists you can message on a regular basis. Unlike traditional therapy where you schedule an appointment and meet in person, Talkspace allows its user to communicate with their therapist as issues arise through the app's encrypted messaging system. It also allows you to request a check-in from your therapist and provides a place for them to upload your therapy notes. Talkspace is more costly than some other apps, but depending on your specific needs, it may be worth it.

Razor Blades and Pot?

Halloween Myths the Media Loves to Scare Us With

For many people, Halloween is the time of year when certain spooky myths and superstitions come alive. It's when we hear stories of black cats and bad luck or ghosts in the attic. But there are some recent myths that often get perpetuated by both mainstream and social media — stories that frighten parents and create an anxious, fearful atmosphere.

Razor Blades and Poison

For a long time, the "razor blades in candy" has been a go-to media story. Every year around Halloween, you're sure to see your local news running a segment that encourages parents to check their kids' candy for tampering so their children don't swallow razor blades or poison.

There have been zero substantiated cases of any child or parent finding a razor blade hidden in the chocolate and nougat. There has, however, been one lone case of a child being poisoned. In 1974, a father hid cyanide in his son's candy in Texas, leading to the child's death. It was discovered that the father was attempting to collect life insurance to ease his \$100,000 debt.

THC

THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) is the primary psychoactive compound found in cannabis, and it's the chemical that makes people high. In more recent years, there have been an increasing number of stories spread on social media about THC-laced candy or edibles being found in kids' candy bags.

There are also news stories of THC-laced candy being found during warranted searches. However, that's as far as the story goes, at least when it comes to Halloween. In 2019, police in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, warned parents to be on the lookout for THC-laced candies after they found some in a bust. While the warning was certainly valid, nothing ever came of it.

Should you check your child's candy? Most definitely! It's always good to check just in case, though the danger is negligible. That said, kids should never take unwrapped or homemade treats while trick-or-treating. This has less to do with hidden razors and more to do with simply not knowing what's in those items, such as potential allergens.



Seeing Double

Celebrity Couples Are Matching Masks and Staying Safe



Chris Pine and his girlfriend Annabelle Wallis like to stroll through Los Angeles together sporting flashy bandanas tied around the lower half of their faces. They may not match patterns, but their cowboy-style face covering still screams "couple."

Justin and Hailey Bieber got a little goofy with an Instagram photoshoot to showcase twinning blue masks with cartoon mouths, proving that proper health and safety can be both entertaining and artistic.

This trend of celebrities finding ways to express themselves while staying safe and healthy isn't just fun — it provides great examples for how others can do the same. Donning a mask doesn't have to feel like a chore or a burden if it's turned into an opportunity to get creative. As with these celebrities, standout matching sets of masks can garner attention, start conversations, and, most importantly of all, demonstrate that proper safety measures deserve extra dedication.

Make mask shopping fun with your significant other or your family by finding masks that you'll all enjoy wearing in public together. It's a great opportunity to show your personality as a collective unit and say "yes" to staying healthy!

Celebrity trends have a way of influencing the public, and the latest spotlight is on face masks. Some go big and bold with rhinestones and glitter while others opt for muted simplicity, but the newest trend to hit the tabloids is couples wearing matching face masks. The attention these masks are drawing is proving to be another great way to get citizens aboard the health and safety train.

Starting all the way back in May, Jennifer Lopez and Alex Rodriguez have been matching masks. They've been seen biking through their Miami neighborhood wearing neon-accented gray masks, and they often take to Instagram for a couples photoshoot in them.

Ben Affleck and Ana de Armas have spent all of 2020 perfecting their synchronized couple stroll. They're frequently spotted wearing masks to complement their respective outfits, but they have also been seen wearing matching versions featuring pastel prints.

Joe's Monthly 'SOUL SNACKS'

"Do you know the difference between leaders, followers, and losers? Leaders stretch with challenges. Followers struggle with challenges. Losers shrink from challenges." –John C. Maxwell

"Victorious warriors win first and then go to war, while defeated warriors go to war first and then seek to win." –Sun Tzu

"You wouldn't worry so much about what others think of you if you realized how seldom they do." –Eleanor Roosevelt

Our Clients Say It Best

"Joe Miller, Lisa Hancock, and the rest of the JML team are the absolute best in the world! They helped me through a very trying time in my life, after a work accident, and they went above and beyond to ensure that myself and my family were taken care of. They continued to check in even after the case was settled. They were easily accessible for questions and advice throughout my ordeal. If you want a team to fight for you and your rights as an injured worker, then Joe and the rest of the Joe Miller Law team are your absolute best choice! You won't regret that decision! Thank you so much, Joe, Lisa, and team!"

-Anna Pruitt-Parks

