

# [***O.J. Simpson's Death Sparks COVID Vaccine Conspiracies***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BSK-63T1-DY68-10M1-00000-00&context=1516831)

Newsweek.com

April 12, 2024 Friday 5:47 AM EST

Copyright © 2024 Newsweek Inc. All Rights Reserved



**Length:** 1097 words

**Byline:** Ryan Smith

**Highlight:** News of the former NFL player's death has led to speculation and the resurfacing of three-year-old images.

**Body**

News of O.J. Simpson passing away has sparked a wave of unfounded conspiracy theories that his death was caused by a COVID-19 vaccine.

In a post shared on X, formerly [*Twitter*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/twitter?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), on Thursday, the former [*NFL*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/nfl?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) player's family [*announced the 76-year-old's death*](https://www.newsweek.com/oj-simpson-dead-family-reacts-1889411?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) while also disclosing the cause.

"On April 10th, our father, Orenthal James Simpson, succumbed to his battle with cancer," the post read. "During this time of transition, his family asks that you please respect their wishes for privacy and grace."

Simpson's death announcement was met with a mixed public reaction, not least because he was largely seen as a controversial figure. Back in 1995, he was acquitted of murdering his former wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend, Ron Goldman.

Following the trial, often described as the "Trial of the Century," Simpson's life remained tumultuous. He was later found liable in a 1997 civil lawsuit for the wrongful deaths of his former wife and Goldman and ordered to pay damages of $33.5 million. Simpson, however, continued to maintain his innocence.

As Simpson's controversies this week became a talking point on social media, there also was an immediate wave of cynicism from a number of vaccine skeptics.

Claims that COVID-19 vaccines cause health problems or increase the chance of death are often made by [*groups opposed to vaccination*](https://www.newsweek.com/jessie-lemonier-cause-death-sparks-covid-vaccine-conspiracy-1777064?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) and used in conspiracy theories concerning supposed population control.

Many anti-vaccination activists have attempted to [*link deaths among athletes*](https://www.newsweek.com/matt-ulrich-death-sparks-covid-vaccine-conspiracy-theories-1842622?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) and other notable figures to being vaccinated—especially those who otherwise appeared healthy before having a cardiac arrest. The phrase "died suddenly" has become a dog-whistle for such assertions.

Linking Simpson to such unfounded claims, Health Nut News blogger Erin Elizabeth shared video footage from August 2021 of the former athlete advising his social media users to get the COVID-19 vaccines.

In the seconds-long clip, Simpson was shown discussing the percentages of those in Florida who had been hospitalized with, or died from, COVID-19 who were unvaccinated.

He then shared the "best analogy ever" that he had seen from a doctor on TV that day. "Being vaccinated is like wearing your seatbelt, [in] that it doesn't guarantee you won't get in an accident, but if you do, you have a much better chance of surviving," he said. "Hey, get your shots. I don't like wearing masks, but it's you people who won't get the shots that have brought this mask thing back. I'm just saying."

Captioning the clip, frequent COVID-19 vaccine critic Elizabeth wrote: "OJ Simpson telling everybody to get their Covid shots like he did. Now he's dead of #TurboCancer. I didn't think anything could kill this guy. And I feel no guilt using him as an example."

"Turbo cancer" is an anti-vaccination myth that has been pushed by those opposed to the COVID-19 vaccines. According to the frequently used misinformation, the vaccines cause fast-growing cancers in those who have taken it.

"#OJSimpson boasted about getting the COVID vaccine, and endorsed others to do the same—with all the standard talking points," another X user said. "Now, he's dead from cancer. Should anyone feel bad?"

Sharing the same video of Simpson urging others to get vaccinated, another commented: "Just a couple years ago OJ Simpson was encouraging everyone to get the COVID vaccine. Now he's dead from Turbo Cancer. Karma works in mysterious ways."

Posting a photo of Simpson getting his COVID-19 vaccine back in January 2021, another baselessly opined: "The real reason OJ Simpson is dead is that vaccine."

A host of other X users pushed back on the conspiracy theory, with some blaming the flood of comments on MAGA (Make America Great Again) conservatives.

"OJ Simpson died of cancer. MAGAts blame it on the vaccine in 3...2...1," wrote one soon after the news of Simpson's death broke.

"So when you look up the actual medical studies and find that #TurboCancer is a myth pushed by anti-vaxxers, [which] scientists from all over the world have studied and in various ways called it rubbish, [who] do I listen to? The scientists with years of experience in corona viruses?" read another comment.

Conspiracy theory researcher Mike Rothschild also weighed in on the matter, stating: "Yes, the antivaxxers are already blaming OJ Simpson's death on non-existent 'turbo cancer' from the COVID vaccine. I wish that was a joke."

"I'm not going to count out the #AntivaxGhouls blaming OJ Simpson's death on covid vaccines, because he doesn't deserve the attention," another said. "I'm just going to point out how stupid they are as a group, thinking a 76 year old man couldn't possibly die from the most common male cancer."

The World Health Organization notes that billions have received a COVID-19 vaccine, the benefits of which outweigh the risks of getting ill with the disease. In the U.S., as of January 1, 2024, there were 12,854 Countermeasures Injury Compensation Program claims regarding COVID-19, including 9,682 that alleged death or injury due to a vaccine, according to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The HRSA noted before the subcommittee that these represented 0.001 percent of vaccines given.

As of April 2023, approximately 366,905,365 [*Pfizer*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/pfizer?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) vaccines had been administered in the U.S., according to Statista. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control ([*CDC*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/cdc?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)) describes the two mRNA vaccines—Pfizer and Moderna—as "safe and effective."

The mRNA technology used to create the vaccines had been in development for more than 15 years before the outbreak of the coronavirus epidemic, and both the Pfizer and Moderna versions received full Food and Drug Administration ([*FDA*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/fda?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)) approval.

FactCheck.org, a nonprofit website that identifies misinformation in American ***politics***, debunked the claims that COVID-19 vaccines have caused excessive deaths, as alleged by an anti-vaccine group, the Vaccine Damage Project.

Although there were "excess deaths"—a higher than expected number of mortalities across the population during a specific time period—in the U.S. in 2021 and 2022, these were linked to cases of COVID-19, along with increased deaths by drug overdose, alcohol and motor vehicle accidents. Many of the 1.3 million excess deaths from February 2021 to April 2023 were due to COVID-19, according to the CDC.

On November 3, the FDA defended Pfizer against accusations that the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was "contaminated."

[*A representative told Newsweek*](https://www.newsweek.com/maga-covid19-vaccine-conspiracy-theory-matthew-perry-death-1838875?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships): "With over a billion doses of the mRNA vaccines administered, no safety concerns related to the sequence of, or amount of, residual DNA have been identified."

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2377277/oj-simpson.jpg)

**Graphic**

O.J. Simpson

Julie Jacobson/Pool/Getty Images

O.J. Simpson is pictured May 13, 2013 in Las Vegas, Nevada. The former NFL player's death has sparked COVID-19 vaccine conspiracy theories.

**Load-Date:** April 12, 2024

**End of Document**