

# [***Wendy Williams' Aphasia Diagnosis Sparks Vaccine Conspiracy Theories***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BD4-SPH1-JBR6-9260-00000-00&context=1516831)

Newsweek.com

February 23, 2024 Friday 6:01 AM EST

Copyright © 2024 Newsweek Inc. All Rights Reserved



**Length:** 1108 words

**Byline:** Ryan Smith

**Highlight:** Williams' medical team this week announced that the TV personality has been diagnosed with primary progressive aphasia and frontotemporal dementia.

**Body**

Wendy Williams' diagnosis with primary progressive aphasia and [*frontotemporal dementia*](https://www.newsweek.com/what-frontotemporal-dementia-bruce-willis-endures-cruel-disease-1781877?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) (FTD) has sparked a conspiracy theory that her condition was caused by one of the COVID-19 vaccines.

Williams' medical team made the announcement on Thursday, sharing that the 59-year-old TV personality received her diagnosis last year after undergoing a "battery of medical tests." Actor Bruce Willis has also been [*diagnosed with FTD*](https://www.newsweek.com/what-frontotemporal-dementia-bruce-willis-endures-cruel-disease-1781877?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships).

"Wendy is still able to do many things for herself," the team said in a press release. "Most importantly she maintains her trademark sense of humor and is receiving the care she requires to make sure she is protected and that her needs are addressed. She is appreciative of the many kind thoughts and good wishes being sent her way."

As fans flocked to social media to discuss Williams' diagnosis, there 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 Williams to such unfounded claims, Health Nut News blogger Erin Elizabeth shared video footage of Williams telling Dr. Mehmet Oz back in 2021 that she would not be taking a COVID-19 vaccine.

"It is so sad to see people like Wendy Williams, much sharper & laser focused here before the Covid shots," wrote Elizabeth on X, formerly [*Twitter*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/twitter?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships). "Same goes for Bruce Willis and his decline. We've seen the emerging studies now on what it does to the the brain. Just tragic."

The post, which as of press time has been viewed more than 450,000 times, attracted a flood of comments supporting the theory that Williams' current illness is a result of having eventually taken a COVID-19 vaccine.

However, many others hit back at the suggestion, with one X user responding: "Equally sad to see people unaware of the neurological complications that come from the virus itself. You could use your platform to draw attention to the suffering of millions instead of this f\*\*\*\*\*\* garbage."

"It's crazy how stupid you are in thinking that things like dementia never existed prior to the COVID vaccine and now that's your immediate go to for any diagnosis of a person," another pushed back. "What about the thousands of people who have had this prior to the vaccine? No one ever thinks."

"Hold on, wasn't Bruce Willis already in declining health before COVID? Why are the shots to blame?" asked another.

Another told Elizabeth that it was "shameful you're associating without any evidence their health problems stem from C19 shots."

*Newsweek* has contacted a representative of Williams via email for comment.

**Wendy Williams' Health Issues**

Per Mayo Clinic, aphasia "robs you of the ability to communicate" and is known to affect "your ability to speak, write and understand language, both verbal and written." The condition "typically occurs suddenly after a stroke or a head injury. But it can also come on gradually from a slow-growing brain tumor or a disease that causes progressive, permanent damage (degenerative)."

FTD consists of incurable disorders that cause degeneration in the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain, leading to "an inevitable decline in functioning" for the patient, according to the Association for Frontotemporal Degeneration (AFTD). There are currently no treatments to stop progression of the disease.

While FTD shares some symptoms with [*Alzheimer's disease*](https://www.newsweek.com/how-scientists-successfully-reversed-alzheimers-mice-1735700?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), the most common type of dementia, there are some key differences. FTD tends to affect people at a younger age, with the onset of most cases occurring from ages 45 to 64.

Williams last hosted the now-defunct *Wendy Williams Show* in July 2021. She was forced to step back as she faced a variety of health issues. This followed breaks the TV host had to take from filming her show in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

In 2018, the host announced she had been [*diagnosed with Graves disease*](https://www.newsweek.com/what-graves-disease-wendy-williams-taking-three-weeks-treatment-815193?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), an autoimmune condition in which the immune system begins identifying the thyroid gland as a foreign body and attacking it with antibodies. Symptoms are varied but include fatigue, muscle weakness, tremors, high blood pressure, weight and hair loss and trouble concentrating.

Williams also contracted a breakthrough case of COVID-19 in September 2021, with pictures from the paparazzi showing her in a wheelchair. She further announced a diagnosis of lymphedema in 2019.

**COVID-19 Vaccines**

As of last April, 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.

In May 2022, Rep. [*Marjorie Taylor Greene*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/marjorie-taylor-greene?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), a Georgia Republican, posted a screenshot on X from an FDA document that discussed adverse reactions to the Pfizer vaccine. She misinterpreted the page, suggesting that 1,223 people died after receiving the Pfizer vaccine.

Although the reports confirm that 1,223 people died after vaccination, the cause of the death was not verified as being linked to the vaccine and was due to a number of reasons, with no "novel safety concerns or risks requiring label changes" found, according to the document.

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/2352915/wendy-williams.jpg)

**Graphic**

Wendy Williams

David Livingston/Getty Images

Wendy Williams is pictured on October 17, 2019 in Hollywood, California. The TV personality's recently announced diagnosis with primary progressive aphasia and frontotemporal dementia has sparked vaccine conspiracy theories on social media.

**Load-Date:** February 23, 2024

**End of Document**