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- RANIA

We decided when we heard the vaccine is ready for teenagers, I took my son to a county site. I didn't know it would be that difficult. With autism, they need routine. So, anything new, they get very afraid. And normally we take him to his dad's office for vaccines. It's comfortable. But this place was new. We got in the building and one of the nurses said, "You're Dr. Hemzawi's wife!" And it made me feel good. It made me feel like they know us and they know about Omar; they knew that he was autistic.

So, we went back and he sits down and he wouldn't take off his shirt. Finally— finally! —we got it off, and they came in with the needle. All of a sudden, Omar was there, and then he wasn't. He was running! So, I had to run after him! And I thought, 'What are they thinking? My son is running naked through the halls!' Well not naked, but he didn't have his shirt on. So, they got a couple of other people, and they asked me, "Can we help?" And I said, "We're not leaving here until he gets his shot. It's a good thing for him." He turned into The Hulk. And then I gave up and said, "Okay, let's put the shirt on and leave." That's when Omar calmed down because he thought we were leaving. I distracted Omar, and they gave him the vaccine! And he cried, but they gave him a lollipop and kept saying, "It's ok. We're sorry, Omar!"

It was difficult. But you have to help yourself first, you know? You know, I have to make sure he is safe first. But I have a lot of friends that are old, and kids can carry the virus. It's to make everyone safe around him, too. The whole community. It's a favor to everyone.