

COVID-19 AstraZeneca vaccine and extremely rare blood clots

Information about your vaccination

The UK vaccination programme has been very successful with more than 34 million people vaccinated and more than 10,000 lives already saved. The rapid rollout has meant that we have been able to protect more people and we are starting to lift the restrictions on our population. This leaflet is designed to help you make an informed decision about vaccination.

What is the concern?

Recently there have been reports of an extremely rare but serious condition involving blood clots and unusual bleeding after AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccination. Some people with this condition have suffered life changing effects and some have died. These cases are being carefully reviewed but the risk factors for this condition are not yet clear.

Although this condition remains extremely rare, there is a higher risk in people after the first dose of the AZ vaccine. To date and overall, just over 10 people develop this condition for every million doses of AZ vaccine given. This is seen more often in younger people and tends to occur more than 4 days and within 28 days (4 weeks) following vaccination.

Similar conditions can also occur naturally, and clotting problems are a common complication of COVID-19 infection. An increased risk has not yet been seen after other COVID-19 vaccines in the UK.

Which vaccine will I be offered?

Until recently we have relied upon all our vaccines being offered without preference to the whole population. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has considered the balance of risks and benefits and has now made the following recommendations (see further detail over the page).

40 years or older or with underlying medical conditions

Older adults (including health and social care workers aged 40 years or older¹), care home residents, and adults of any age with certain medical conditions are at high risk of the complications of COVID-19. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and the JCVI advises that you should still receive any of the available COVID-19 vaccines.² The benefits of vaccination in protecting you against the serious consequences of COVID-19 outweigh any risk of this extremely rare condition.

If you are a healthy person aged 30 to 39

In the current situation, the JCVI has advised that it is preferable for people in this age group to have a vaccine other than AZ where possible. You are more at risk of the serious consequences of COVID-19 and will have the most benefit from being vaccinated if you are older, male, from certain minority ethnic backgrounds, in some occupations, or are obese. It is important that you have the vaccination as soon as possible to protect you and to reduce the chance of passing on the virus. If the situation changes and you are offered the AZ vaccination you may go ahead after you have considered all the risks and benefits. Please carefully consider the risk of COVID-19 to both you and your family and friends before making your decision. Please see the table on the next page.

If you are a healthy younger person aged 18 to 29

Currently JCVI has advised that it is preferable for people under 30 to have a vaccine other than AZ because the risk from COVID-19 infections is so low. If you are offered the AZ vaccination you may wish to go ahead after you have considered all the risks and benefits for you.

What about the second dose?

Everybody who has already had a first dose of AZ vaccine without suffering this rare side effect should complete the course. It is expected that the first dose of the vaccine will have given you some protection, particularly against severe disease. Having the second dose will give you higher and longer lasting protection and tends to cause less of the common side effects (including short lived headache).

1. This includes unpaid carers and family members of those who are immunosuppressed

2. If you have certain rare blood clotting disorders then you should discuss whether you can have the AZ vaccine with your specialist

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What are the potential risks and benefits of the AZ vaccine compared to the risks associated with COVID-19 for my age group?

Age	Risk from COVID-19	Risk of vaccination	Benefit of vaccination
Over 50 years of age or with underlying medical conditions	<p>Low</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> chance of catching and spreading infection <p>Very high</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> hospitalisation intensive care admission death <p>Moderate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long COVID 	<p>Uncommon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sore arm feeling tired headache general aches flu like symptoms <p>Extremely rare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> clotting problems (around 1 in 100,000 first doses) 	<p>After 1st dose, more than 80% reduction in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> deaths hospitalisation intensive care <p>After 2nd dose, more than 95% reduction in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> deaths <p>After 1st dose, between 60% and 70% reduction in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> catching and passing on infection <p>After 2nd dose, more than 85% reduction in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> catching and passing on infection
40 to 49 years of age	<p>High</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> chance of catching and spreading infection <p>Moderate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> hospitalisation intensive care admission death Long COVID 	<p>Common</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sore arm feeling tired headache general aches flu like symptoms <p>Extremely rare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> clotting problems (around 1 in 100,000 first doses) 	<p>After 1st dose, between 60% and 70% reduction in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> catching and passing on infection <p>After 2nd dose, more than 85% reduction in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> catching and passing on infection
30 to 39 years of age	<p>High</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> chance of catching and spreading infection <p>Low</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> hospitalisation intensive care admission death <p>Moderate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long COVID 	<p>Common</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sore arm feeling tired headache general aches flu like symptoms <p>Extremely rare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> clotting problems (around 1 in 50,000 first doses) 	<p>After 1st dose, between 60% and 70% reduction in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> catching and passing on infection <p>After 2nd dose, more than 85% reduction in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> catching and passing on infection
18 to 29 years of age	<p>Very high</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> chance of catching and spreading infection <p>Very low</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> hospitalisation intensive care admission death <p>Moderate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long COVID 	<p>Very common</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sore arm feeling tired headache general aches flu like symptoms <p>Extremely rare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> clotting problems (around 1 in 50,000 first doses) 	<p>After 1st dose, between 60% and 70% reduction in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> catching and passing on infection <p>After 2nd dose, more than 85% reduction in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> catching and passing on infection

What should I look out for after vaccination?

Although serious side effects are very rare, if you experience any of the following more than 4 days and within 28 days (4 weeks) after vaccination you should seek medical advice urgently from your GP or Emergency Department.

- a new, severe headache which is not helped by usual painkillers or is getting worse
- a headache which seems worse when lying down or bending over or
- an unusual headache that may be accompanied by:
 - blurred vision, nausea and vomiting
 - difficulty with your speech
 - weakness, drowsiness or seizures
- new, unexplained pinprick bruising or bleeding
- shortness of breath, chest pain, leg swelling
- persistent abdominal pain

Vaccination, helping to protect those most vulnerable.

Further information can be found at the following link:

www.nidirect.gov.uk/covid-vaccine



Public Health Agency
 12-22 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BS.
 Tel: 0300 555 0114 (local rate).
www.publichealth.hscni.net

Find us on:



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