

Sussex COVID-19 Vaccination Programme

Public messaging: AZ vaccine

Reassurance about the use of Oxford Astra Zeneca vaccine 08 April 2021

Following the national media conference yesterday, we recognise that there are likely to be an increase in calls and contacts from patients in relation to the Oxford AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.

This toolkit aims to provide information to help with managing patient enquiries.

Key information:

- Guidance and position statements:
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-and-blood-clotting>
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/mhra-issues-new-advice-concluding-a-possible-link-between-covid-19-vaccine-astrazeneca-and-extremely-rare-unlikely-to-occur-blood-clots>
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-approval-of-covid-19-vaccine-astrazeneca/information-for-healthcare-professionals-on-covid-19-vaccine-astrazeneca>
- Patient materials
 - (LEAFLET for Patients)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/976880/PHE_COVID-19_AZ_vaccination_guide.pdf
 - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/>

Key messages for call handlers

What is the concern?

- We are aware that the MHRA, which regulates vaccines, is carrying out a review of reports of a very rare condition involving blood clots and unusual bleeding after vaccination. This is being carefully reviewed but the risk factors for this condition are not yet clear.
- Although this condition remains extremely rare there appears to be a higher risk in people who have had the first dose of the AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccine.
- Around 4 people develop this condition for every million doses of AZ vaccine doses given.
- This is seen slightly more often in younger people and tends to occur between 4 days and 2 weeks following vaccination.
- This condition 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 but is being carefully monitored.
- If you have had the vaccine in the last 4 weeks, please be aware of any side effects or concerns, as you would with any vaccine, and call 111 if you experience any of the identified side effects.

What to look out for after vaccination

- Although serious side effects are very rare, if you experience any of the following from around 4 days to 4 weeks after vaccination you should seek medical advice urgently:
 - 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
 - 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 or persistent abdominal pain

What you should do next:

Over 50 years of age or with underlying medical conditions

- Current advice remains that you should still receive any of the available COVID-19 vaccines.
- The benefits of vaccination in protecting you against the serious consequences of COVID-19 outweigh any risk of this rare condition.
- You should also complete your course with the same vaccine you had for the first dose.
- If your first dose was with AZ vaccine without suffering any serious side effects you should have the second dose on time as you may still be at high risk of the complications of COVID-19.

If you are a healthy person over 30 to 50 years of age

- Current advice is that all adults in this age group should still receive any of the available COVID-19 vaccines.
- The benefits of vaccination in protecting you against the serious consequences of COVID-19 outweigh any risk of this rare condition.
- You should also complete your course with the same vaccine you had for the first dose.

If you are a healthy younger person aged 18 to 29

- The MHRA and the JCVI advises that all adults in this age group should still receive any of the available COVID-19 vaccines.
- The benefits of vaccination in protecting you against the serious consequences of COVID-19 outweigh any risk of this rare condition.
- You should also complete your course with the same vaccine you had for the first dose.
- Currently JCVI has advised that it is preferable for people under 30 to have a vaccine other than AZ.
- If you choose to have another COVID-19 vaccine you may have to wait to be protected.

- You may wish to go ahead with the AZ vaccination after you have considered all the risks and benefits for you.

About the second dose

- If you have already had a first dose of AZ vaccine without suffering any serious side effects you should complete the course.
- This includes people aged 18 to 29 years who are health and social care workers, unpaid carers and family members of those who are immunosuppressed.

Potential questions and suggested responses

I have had the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine for my first dose and I do not want it for my second

At this time, the advice remains clear that if you didn't have any serious side effects with your first dose, even if you are under 30, then you should still have your second dose of AZ when called.

Anyone who has already received the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine and has not had significant side effects, will receive the same vaccine for their second dose.

Do I need the second vaccine?

Yes, the 1st dose of the COVID-19 vaccine should give you some protection from coronavirus from 3 or 4 weeks after you've had it, particularly from severe disease.

But you need to have the 2nd dose of the vaccine to give you higher and longer lasting protection.

How safe is the vaccine?

The vaccines approved for use in the UK have met strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness set out by the independent Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Any coronavirus vaccine that is approved must go through all the clinical trials and safety checks all other licensed medicines go through. The MHRA follows international standards of safety.

So far, millions of people have been given a COVID-19 vaccine and reports of serious side effects, such as allergic reactions or clotting problems, have been very rare.

The UK vaccination programme has been very successful with more than 30 million people vaccinated and more than 6,000 lives already saved.

Suggested answer phone update

If you are calling about your COVID vaccination, please listen to the following information.

If you are in the eligible groups – aged 50 and over, are clinically extremely vulnerable, have an underlying health condition or are an unpaid carer – and you have not had your vaccination, please call us between the hours of <insert> / call <insert GP Federation number> to speak to the team about your vaccination.

You can also call 119 or visit nhs.uk/covidvaccine to book your appointment at one of the vaccination centres.

If you are calling about your second dose appointment, please be assured you will be contacted as you approach the 12 week mark since your first vaccination. Clinics are happening now for everyone who is due their second vaccination and you will be contacted when it is due.

If you are calling in relation to the recent news about the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, please be reassured that the reactions are very rare. The advice remains that if you had your first dose with Oxford/AstraZeneca without suffering any serious side effects then you should continue to have the second dose as planned. It is important to have this second dose to ensure you have higher and longer lasting protection.

For people under 30, who are yet to have their first vaccine, the advice is that it is preferable for them to have a vaccine other than AZ, but that the benefits of vaccination in protecting you against the serious complications of COVID-19 outweigh any risk of this rare condition.

If you want to find out more about the vaccine or the programme, including FAQs, please visit:

www.sussexhealthandcare/get-my-jab

Website information

Update: Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine

The MHRA is carrying out a detailed review of reports of a very rare blood clotting problem affecting a small number of people who have had the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine.

The problem can also happen in people who have not been vaccinated and it's not yet clear why it affects some people.

The COVID-19 vaccine can help stop you getting seriously ill or dying from coronavirus.

If you have already had your vaccination, there is no change to your planned second dose unless you had had significant side effects with the first dose.

Call 111 immediately if you get any of these symptoms starting from around 4 days to 4 weeks after being vaccinated:

- a severe headache that is not relieved with painkillers or is getting worse
- a headache that feels worse when you lie down or bend over
- a headache that's unusual for you and occurs with blurred vision, feeling or being sick, problems speaking, weakness, drowsiness or seizures (fits)

- a rash that looks like small bruises or bleeding under the skin
- shortness of breath, chest pain, leg swelling or persistent abdominal (tummy) pain

If you are due your second dose vaccination, you will be contacted by our vaccination team as you approach the 12 mark since your first vaccination to arrange your appointment. Please do not contact us unless you are concerned that you have gone passed the 12 week mark from your first vaccination.

For people under 30 without other health conditions, it's currently advised that it's preferable to have another COVID-19 vaccine instead of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine. If you choose to have another COVID-19 vaccine you may have to wait to be protected, but an alternative to AZ will be made available to you by the NHS. You may wish to go ahead with the AZ vaccination after you have considered all the risks and benefits for you. The NHS will contact you when it is your turn to receive your vaccination.

Read this patient leaflet – add the leaflet here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/976880/PHE_COVID-19_AZ_vaccination_guide.pdf

[Find out more about COVID-19 vaccination and blood clotting on GOV.UK](#)

Find out more about the vaccination programme in Sussex:

www.sussexhealthandcare/get-my-jab

Social media

The @MHRAGovuk is carrying out a review of reports of a very rare blood clotting problem in a small number of people who have had the Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.

The benefits of being vaccinated outweigh any potential risk.

Please continue to attend your appointments and make sure you receive this vital protection.

We are encouraging all of our patients to continue to attend your booked appointments for the COVID-19 vaccination.

We know there have been some concerns raised about the use of the Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine but the benefits of being vaccinated outweigh any potential risk.

For people under 30 without other health conditions, it's currently advised that it's preferable to have another COVID-19 vaccine instead of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine.

Please continue to come to your appointments and receive your protection.

If you have questions or concerns about the Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine you can find out more at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/>

Everyone who has had their first dose is still encouraged to attend their appointment to have their second when it is their turn.

Have concerns about the COVID-19 vaccine – read the latest advice and guidance for you:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/976880/PHE_COVID-19_AZ_vaccination_guide.pdf