



Hesitancy around Covid vaccination

A poll carried out by the Royal Society for Public Health in December found that just 57% of respondents from black or ethnic minority backgrounds were likely to accept a Covid-19 vaccine, compared to 79% of white respondents. The poll also found that BAME respondents who were not willing to be vaccinated were especially receptive to offers of further health information from their GP. Over one third (35%) said they would likely change their minds and get the jab if given more information by their GP about how effective it is.

Londonwide LMCs welcomes work to improve vaccine uptake and address vaccine hesitancy in London, particularly amongst BAME communities. The Mayor of London, Greater London Authority and NHS England London are planning pan-London Q&As with specific vaccine hesitant communities over the next few months and we will share information on these events as we receive it.

There is a Covid-19 vaccine seminar organised by the NHS Race and Health Observatory on Thursday 11 February from 5-7pm. You can join the webinar live via Microsoft Teams (this link will become active close to the start of the event).

You and your team may also find the following FAQs of assistance when addressing concerns raised by patients:

Has the vaccine been 'rushed through', is it safe?

The vaccines developed by Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford-AstraZeneca have been approved for use in the UK and have met strict current 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 and the UK has some of the highest safety standards in the world. So far, thousands of people have been given a Covid-19 vaccine in the clinical trials and no serious side effects or complications have been reported. However there is a very small risk of an allergic reaction which was identified when the programme was expanded to the general population (see further information below).

In clinical trials most of the time is spent waiting whilst funding is applied for and the trial is approved - the waiting and logistics take time. Covid-19 has a world-wide interest and has shown if you bring together very clever people, unlimited money and high numbers of volunteers you can create a vaccine in under a year. Safety has not been compromised as the regulatory bodies have had access along the way.

If it isn't safe for children and pregnant women, how is it safe for me?

All medicines, including vaccines, rely on clinical trials to determine their safety. Trials are not carried out routinely in pregnancy, therefore there is no data as of yet on the safety of Covid-19 vaccines in pregnancy, either from human or animal studies.

Given the lack of evidence and as a precautionary approach pregnant women should not receive the vaccine, unless they are at a very high risk of becoming infected, or of developing severe complications if infected. In which case she should discuss vaccination with a doctor or nurse. Data is anticipated in the future which will inform discussions on vaccination in pregnancy.

Lessons have been learnt from historical mistakes in medicine development and checks and balances have been introduced to mitigate errors of the past. Medical and technological advances allow scientists to collect data in real time. Cascade systems are already in operation so that responses to adverse events are dealt with promptly. Patients are being followed up over the long-term and the safety process will continue, with any reports generated being acted upon as soon as required to protect patients. This system was not available many years ago.

Are the vaccine ingredients permissible in my religion?

The British Islamic Medical Association has issued a position statement recommending the Pfizer/BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine for eligible at-risks individuals in the Muslim community and another one for the Oxford-AstraZeneca

The Conference of European Rabbis has released a position statement recommending Covid-19 vaccines for the Jewish community.

Are there any materials of human or animal origin in the vaccine?

No. There is no material of foetal or animal origin in either vaccine. A detailed review of the vaccines and their ingredients are published on the

MHRA's website.

Are there microchips in the vaccine?

No, the vaccines do not contain microchips.

How do I know I am not allergic to the vaccine?

Around 40,000 people have been involved in the initial trials, and around 6 million people have been vaccinated in the UK to date, including the Queen and Sir David Attenborough. It is very rare for anyone to have a serious reaction to the vaccine (anaphylaxis). If this does happen, it usually happens within minutes of receiving the vaccine. Staff giving the vaccine are trained to deal with allergic reactions and treat them immediately.

What about the side effects?

Minor side effects such as fever, sore arm, headache, are common with the mRNA vaccines, and are seen within a short period of administration. You can report suspected side effects to medicines, vaccines or medical device and diagnostic adverse incidents used in coronavirus treatment to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency using the Yellow Card safety scheme. Visit Yellow Card for further information. At your vaccine appointment you can ask any questions that you might have.

Can I wait and have the vaccine later or choose the vaccine I want to have?

Vaccinations are being delivered based on JCVI priority groups. As such, we would not recommend that you wait after being offered a vaccine because the offer indicates that you are in a high-risk group. The delay could be dangerous for you or those you look after.

Could the vaccine affect my genes?

There is no evidence to suggest that individual genetic material will undergo an alteration after receiving the vaccine. None of the vaccines approved interfere in any way with your own DNA. Your genes reside in your DNA and the vaccine does not enter your cell nucleus where your DNA resides. You can read more about how mRNA vaccines work here.

Do I have to have the vaccine?

No, you have the right to refuse. Vaccines are not mandatory in the UK. However we would encourage you to read information from credible sources to make an informed decision.

Will the vaccine give me Covid-19?

No, you cannot catch Covid-19 from the vaccine. It is not a live vaccine therefore you would not be injected with the actual virus. If you test positive after vaccination it is possible you may have caught Covid-19 before being vaccinated and not realise until after you had the vaccine. If you have symptoms of Covid-19 around the time of vaccination, then you should self-isolate and get a test. You may have some minor side effects, but this is normal. The vaccine typically takes until three weeks after the first dose is administered to provide protection from the virus.

I have already had Covid-19 – I don't need to be vaccinated, do I?

Past Covid-19 infection provides some immunity, but people may still carry and transmit the virus to other people. It is advisable to have the vaccine even if you have already been infected with Covid-19.

Can I transmit the virus to other people after I've been vaccinated?

We don't know yet therefore you need to still follow the guidance to help keep other people safe. The vaccines are highly effective at preventing the person vaccinated from becoming ill or dying from Covid-19. Research is underway to answer this question, so it is essential that people continue to follow the government guidelines (hands, face, space) after they've been vaccinated.

Is translated information about the vaccination programme available?

NHS England are developing a suite of videos in community languages recorded by clinicians (9 currently – looking to extend to additional languages particularly to include Black Caribbean and Black African languages where uptake is low) to help address concerning and inaccurate information which is known to be in circulation and believed to be deterring vaccine uptake.

The following are available in Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Farsi, Gujarati, Hindi, Kurdish, Nepali, Punjabi, Polish, Romanian, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog and Turkish. Some of these – not all at the moment – are available to order through the Health Publications website:

Covid-19 vaccination: guide for older adults

What to expect after your Covid-19 vaccination

Why you are being asked to wait

Women of childbearing age, currently pregnant or breastfeeding

Guide for healthcare workers

Other sites with useful Q&A sections on them include:

NHS website.

This BMJ article.