

Vaccine Q&A 27 September 2021

- 1) Why is vaccine immunity considered more valid than natural immunity? I have read quite a few papers that suggest there is very little difference between the infectivity rates and transmission rates between the two. Why is natural immunity not considered, especially in those who are young and healthy?**

Answer from Professor G.J. Melendez-Torres, Professor of Clinical and Social Epidemiology:

Natural immunity is tenuous and of unclear duration. If it were a vaccine, the side effects—which are the side effects of COVID-19—would mean that it would not pass regulatory approval, let alone leave the lab. This is the case even in the context of the lower risk of severe disease in younger people. Natural immunity is a risky strategy that also unnecessarily places yourself and others at risk.

- 2) I have a phobia of needles and so am reluctant to get the vaccine. Is there another way to take it and if not, are there any measures in place to support me when I receive it?**

Answer from Sarah Manton, Vaccine Hesitancy Clinical Lead, NHS Devon:

There is no other way to receive the vaccine other than by injection, however there are things we can do to try to help. The vaccination team on campus will endeavour to make you feel at ease by spending time with you and helping you to understand the procedure. They can offer you a separate space for your pre-vaccination consultation and to receive the vaccination itself. I would also suggest you bring someone along whom you trust. They can also offer you a space to rest afterwards until you feel comfortable leaving; you will need to wait 15 minutes at least following the Pfizer vaccination.

- 3) Is it possible to receive Pfizer as your second dose if the first dose was the Moderna vaccine since they're both mRNAs?**

Answer from Sarah Manton, Vaccine Hesitancy Clinical Lead, NHS Devon:

We try to give the second dose the same as the first, as that is the guidance issued unless there has been a severe adverse reaction to the first dose. If at all possible, we would urge you to seek the same vaccine as the second dose.

- 4) Are Moderna and Pfizer more dangerous for people with autoimmune diseases because [it is claimed] they boost immunity and trigger chronic autoimmune disease? Would AstraZeneca be more beneficial for people with autoimmune disease?**

Answer from Sarah Manton, Vaccine Hesitancy Clinical Lead, NHS Devon:

There is no evidence that Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have an increased risk of side effects in those with autoimmune conditions compared to AstraZeneca. Regarding general side effects from the COVID-19 vaccination, it appears that the rate and type of side effects are similar in those with or without autoimmune conditions.

- 5) Rather than pushing vaccinations so hard, why doesn't the government and the University put more effort into encouraging people to become healthier? Many studies show that BMI and markers of metabolic health are significantly related to COVID-19 outcomes.**

Answer from Professor G.J. Melendez-Torres, Professor of Clinical and Social Epidemiology:

General health-promoting behaviours are a very important way to reduce the population burden of ill health, including from COVID-19. But these behaviours take months, if not years, to materialise into longer-term benefits. The University already invests significant money into encouraging people to become healthier, for example through sports provision, but that won't fix COVID-19 today. The vaccine will lead to substantial increases in population protection on a timescale that health-promoting behaviours - as important as they are - cannot meet.

- 6) I have joint pain, which flares up when my body is under stress. Is there any way the vaccine will not knock me out for a week or two? Most people I know have had worse reactions to vaccination than the disease.**

Answer from Sarah Manton, Vaccine Hesitancy Clinical Lead, NHS Devon:

We can't predict how each individual will react to the vaccine. Side effects are slight in the great majority of cases, with most people experiencing minimal effects such as sore arm and general malaise/tiredness for 24 hours.

- 7) I have heard vaccines can cause irregular periods, or unexpected bleeding?**

Answer from NHS and UK Health Security Agency information

Period problems are extremely common and can be caused by a variety of factors including stress and other short-term illnesses. Although some people have reported that their periods were briefly disrupted in the month after vaccination, there is no evidence that this was due to the vaccine.

Further Support

In-person support at the vaccine clinic

If you are worried about going to the vaccination clinic on campus alone, a member of the chaplaincy team would be happy to accompany you. To arrange this, you can email chaplaincy@exeter.ac.uk, or you can call/text 07557 064976.

Needle phobia

For more information about dealing with phobias, please view the [Facing your Fears workbook](#) from CEDAR (Clinical Education, Development and Research) academics.

Financial support

If you are required to travel further for a second COVID-19 vaccination and are concerned that you cannot afford to, you can apply for financial help as part of our [Success for All Fund here](#).

Wellbeing support

If you need further support, you can contact our wellbeing services at any time. For more information, please visit our webpages for [Exeter](#) and [Cornwall](#).