

About the AstraZeneca vaccine

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Feel good about taking the AstraZeneca Vaccine. All approved COVID-19 vaccines protect against serious illness, including AstraZeneca.

Effectiveness against serious illness:

	Pfizer: 75-100% (after dose 2)
AstraZeneca: 100% (after dose 2)	Moderna: 100% (14 days after dose 2)
	Johnson & Johnson: 85.4% (28 days after dose)

All approved COVID-19 vaccines also protect against mild to moderate illness. For these symptoms, research shows that the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines may be more effective (94-95%) than AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson (60-70%). As developers improve their vaccines, these numbers may change. The risks of serious illness and hospitalization due to COVID-19 are well known. Experts agree that patients should accept the first vaccination offered to them. All vaccines approved for COVID-19 protect against serious illness, as well as mild to moderate illness.

Is the AstraZeneca vaccine effective against the variants?

It is normal for viruses to mutate, and we know mutations may affect how well vaccines work. In Ontario, the UK variant (B.1.1.7) is the most common right now. Research shows how well vaccines protect against the variants. Early data for AstraZeneca shows.

- **U.K. variant (B.1.1.7):** Protects well
- **South African variant (B.1.3.5):** May not protect well
- **Brazil variant (P.1):** No data, more research needed

All vaccine developers, like AstraZeneca, are improving their vaccines. Improved vaccines may protect more against the variants.

Why was there a dosage mistake in the AstraZeneca trial?

The mistake was due to a manufacturing issue. For one group in the AstraZeneca trials, the first shot only had a half-dose of the vaccine. The mistake was corrected quickly.

How safe is the AstraZeneca vaccine compared to the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines?

Serious side effects are extremely rare for all four vaccines, and non-serious side effects such as sore arm or fatigue seem to happen equally with each of the approved vaccines. The vaccines are also safe for patients with allergies, who are pregnant, or who

are immunocompromised. Individuals in these groups are advised to speak to their primary care provider to discuss the benefits of getting vaccinated and possible risks based on their individual health information.

If I get the AstraZeneca vaccine, can I “top up” with the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine?

It is not recommended to “mix and match” vaccines. We do not know yet what the effect might be — either on safety or immune system protection. It may be possible to get one of these vaccines after a complete course of the AstraZeneca vaccine. More research is needed.

Does the AstraZeneca vaccine cause blood clots?

There is no overall increased risk of developing a blood clot after receiving any of the approved COVID-19 vaccines, including the AstraZeneca vaccine. However, the AstraZeneca vaccine may be associated with extremely rare cases of blood clots that occur in the brain and are associated with low blood platelets. This has not been confirmed, but is being investigated. Less than 40 cases have been reported worldwide, out of tens of millions of doses delivered. Since infection with COVID-19 has been shown to have a high risk of blood clots, many experts feel it is safer to be vaccinated than to risk getting COVID-19.

Can the AstraZeneca vaccine give me COVID-19?

No. Viral vector vaccines like this one contain a weakened version of a live virus that is not itself the COVID-19 virus – in this case, it’s made up of parts of a common cold virus. The vaccine does not contain the parts necessary to actually cause a cold or COVID-19.

Why has the time between doses been extended? Is that safe?

Research informed the decision to increase the time between doses. Clinical trial data for AstraZeneca shows that delaying the second dose to ≥ 12 weeks is more protective than a shorter time between doses. This protection is for symptomatic illness. Research also shows that AstraZeneca is 76% effective after a single standard dose of vaccine. This protection starts 3 weeks after the first dose. It then continues until at least 3 months after the first dose and likely longer. If more people get their first vaccine dose, it will lower the number of infections and people going to the hospital. Increased time between doses allows more people to get their first dose faster. Experts will continue to review new data. The recommended time between doses may change again if research shows it offers better protection.



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