

## Frequently Asked Questions on COVID-19 Vaccination

Can people with allergies get vaccinated ?

Can pregnant women take Covid 19 vaccine? What about lactating mothers ?

Do I get enough antibodies after getting vaccinated ?

Is blood clotting common after taking the vaccine shots ?

If I have contracted Covid, after how many days can I get myself vaccinated ?

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These are some of the frequently asked questions people raise about Covid vaccination. Dr. V K Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog and Dr. Randeep Guleria, Director, All India Institute of Medical Sciences have addressed various doubts people have regarding COVID-19 vaccines in a special programme on DD News on Sunday the 6<sup>th</sup> June.

Read on, to be armed with the correct facts and information, and stay protected from the infection. This and other questions are also answered in the FAQs of the Union Health Ministry ([https://www.mohfw.gov.in/covid\\_vaccination/vaccination/faqs.html](https://www.mohfw.gov.in/covid_vaccination/vaccination/faqs.html))

### **Can people with Allergies get Vaccinated?**

**Dr. Paul:** If someone has a significant allergy problem, then COVID vaccine should be taken only after medical advice. However, if it is only a question of minor allergies like getting common cold, skin allergies, etc., one should not hesitate to take the vaccine.

**Dr. Guleria:** Those on prior medication for allergies should not stop these, they should continue to take the medication regularly while getting themselves vaccinated. It is also important to understand that arrangements have been made at all vaccination sites for management of allergies arising due to vaccination. Hence, we advise that even if you happen to have a severe allergy, you keep taking the medication and go and get yourself vaccinated.

### **Can pregnant women take COVID-19 vaccine?**

**Dr. Paul:** As per our current guidelines (*read PIB press release dated 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021-<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1719925>*) vaccination should not be given to pregnant women. The reason for this is that a decision recommending vaccination to pregnant women could not be taken by doctors and the scientific community based on available data from vaccine trials. However, the Government of India will clarify this situation in a few days, based on new scientific inputs.

It is being found that many COVID-19 vaccines are being found safe for pregnant women; we hope the route should open for our two vaccines as well. We request the public to be a little more patient, especially considering that the vaccines have been developed in a very short span of time, and pregnant women are not usually included in the initial trials, due to safety concerns.

**Dr. Guleria:** Many countries have begun vaccination for pregnant women. The US FDA has given approval for Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. Data regarding COVAXIN and COVISHIELD will also come soon; some data is already available, and we hope that in a few days, we hope to get the full required data and grant approval for vaccinating pregnant women in India too.

### **Can breastfeeding mothers take COVID-19 Vaccine?**

**Dr. Paul:** There is a very clear guideline regarding this the vaccine is absolutely safe for lactating mothers. There is no need for any fear. There is no need to stop or pause breastfeeding either before or after vaccination.

(<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1719925>),

## **Do I get enough antibodies after getting vaccinated ?**

**Dr. Guleria:** It is important to understand that we should not judge the efficacy of vaccines only by the amount of antibodies getting generated. Vaccines give many types of protection - such as through antibodies, cell-mediated immunity and memory cells (which generate more antibodies when we get infected). Moreover, the efficacy results which have come so far are based on trial studies, where the study design of each trial is somewhat different.

Data available till now shows clearly that efficacy of all vaccines - whether COVAXIN, COVISHIELD or Sputnik V - are more or less equivalent. We should not hence say take this vaccine or that vaccine, whichever vaccine is available in your area, please go ahead and get yourself vaccinated so that you and your family are safe.

**Dr. Paul:** Some people seem to be thinking of getting an antibody test done post vaccination. But that is not required to be done for the simple fact that antibodies alone do not indicate the immunity of a person. This is so because of T-cells or memory cells; these undergo certain changes when we receive the vaccine, they become stronger and gain resistance power. And T-Cells are not detected by antibody tests as these are found in bone marrow. Hence, our appeal is to not fall in the tendency of doing antibody tests either before or after getting vaccinated, take the vaccine which is available, take both doses at the right time and follow COVID Appropriate Behaviour. Also, people should not be under the false notion that the vaccine is not required if you have had COVID-19.

## **Is blood clotting common after taking the vaccine shots ?**

**Dr. Paul:** A few cases of this complication did come to the fore, particularly with regard to Astra-Zeneca Vaccine. This complication occurred in Europe where this risk was seen to be present to some extent in their younger population due to their lifestyle, body and genetic structure. But, I would like to assure you that we have systematically examined this data in India and found that such blood-clotting incidents are almost negligible here - so negligible that one need not worry about it. In European countries, these complications were found to be almost 30 times more than that in our country.

**Dr. Guleria:** It has been seen earlier also that blood clotting after surgery occurs less in Indian population in comparison to that in US and European populations. This side-effect, named as Vaccine induced Thrombosis or Thrombocytopenia, is very rare in India, found to occur in a much lesser proportion than in Europe. Hence, there is no need to be scared of this. Treatments also are available for this, which can be adopted, if diagnosed early.

## **If I have contracted Covid, after how many days can I get myself vaccinated ?**

**Dr. Guleria:** The latest guidelines clearly state that a person who caught COVID-19 can take the vaccine after three months from the day of recovery. Doing this will help the body develop stronger immunity and the effect of the vaccine will be better. (<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1719925>).

Both the experts – Dr. Paul and Dr Guleria also asserted and reassured that our vaccines are effective on the mutants which have been seen in India till date. They also termed as fake and unfounded the rumours circulating on social media that our immune system becomes weak after taking vaccines or people die after taking vaccines, a wrong belief held by some people in rural areas and remote blocks.

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