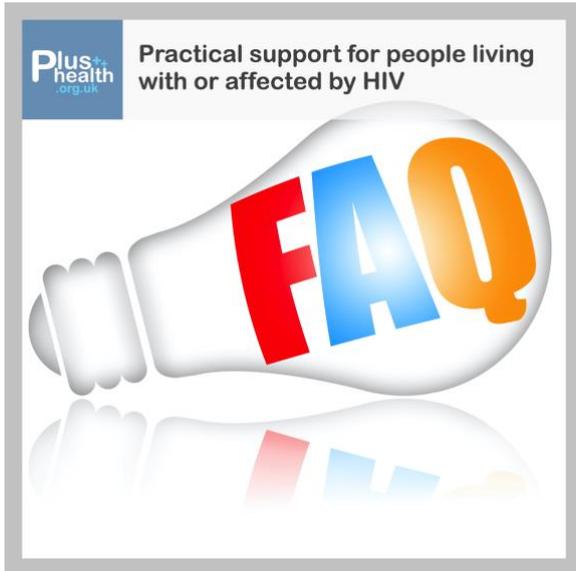


Coronavirus vaccination - frequently asked questions



We've had lots of enquiries about the coronavirus vaccination for people living with HIV. We've put together a FAQ sheet to help answer these as best we can.

We've based our answers on the available information provided by the British HIV Association (BHIVA), European AIDS Clinical Society (EACS), Public Health England, NHS, HIV support organisations and reliable information available in the public domain.

Is the coronavirus vaccine safe for people living with HIV?

Yes – absolutely! The UK has some of the strictest safety standards in the world when it comes to the regulation of vaccines and medicines. The coronavirus vaccines have been authorised by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and they have concluded the vaccines are safe and effective.

Were people living with HIV included in any of the vaccine studies?

Both the AstraZeneca (Oxford) and Pfizer clinical trials included a small number of people living with HIV and were found to be safe and effective. We need more data to fully understand the effect HIV may have on the longer-term protection provided by the different vaccines available now or being developed.

Does the vaccine contain coronavirus?

No, there is no 'live' coronavirus in the vaccine. so It's not possible to become unwell with COVID-19 from the vaccination. The AstraZeneca or 'Oxford vaccine' contains a weakened form of adenovirus but this doesn't cause illness and similar methods are used to produce many other vaccines.

My GP isn't aware I'm living with HIV – can my clinic give me the coronavirus vaccination?

We recommend you share your HIV diagnosis with your GP to ensure you get the most appropriate care and treatment. If you don't wish to share this information talk to your HIV clinic team as they may be able to give you the vaccination. In England each NHS Trust have been asked to make the vaccination available to HIV clinics but there isn't yet a standard process in place. We suggest you continue to check in with your clinic to see when they will be able to offer you the vaccination.

I'm not registered with a GP – can I still get the vaccination?

We recommend you register with a GP to ensure you receive the coronavirus vaccination. The UK Home Office have confirmed that immigration status will not be checked for people registering with a GP so they can receive the vaccination free of charge.

Can I choose which vaccine I can have?

The short answer is no. The vaccination programme is dependent on vaccine availability. The AstraZeneca vaccine is much easier to transport and store when compared to the Pfizer vaccine, and is therefore more widely used at vaccination centres. As time goes on other vaccines will be available, but it's still unlikely there will be a choice as to which vaccine you have.

Which vaccine is most effective for people living with HIV?

We don't yet know if a particular vaccine is more effective for people living with HIV. More data is needed to answer to this question. Like all vaccinations there is individual variation in the immune system response to the vaccination. There is no reason to believe the coronavirus vaccination won't provide a good level of protection for people living with HIV.

Will the vaccine interact with my HIV medication?

None of the coronavirus vaccine interactions with HIV medication. You should continue to take your medication as directed every day prior to and after having the vaccination.

Can the vaccine change my viral load or CD4 cell count?

If you're on treatment and have undetectable viral load it is very unlikely there will be any change your viral load or CD4 cell count. For a small number of people there can be a short-lived rise or 'blip' in viral load, but this is nothing to be concerned about. If you're not yet taking HIV treatment there may be a temporary increase viral load and possibly a fall in the CD4 cell count. If you have any concerns about this talk to your clinic team.

What side effects can I expect?

Side effects or reactions to the vaccination vary from person to person. You may experience some pain or redness at the injection site for a short period of time, which is common with all vaccinations. Other side effects may include muscle aches, slight fever, headache and tiredness, but these usually resolve in within 24-48 hours. If you have any concerns contact your GP.

Do any of the vaccines include ingredients of animal or human origin?

None of the approved coronavirus vaccines contain ingredients that originate from cows, pigs, chickens or other animals.

Do the vaccines cause changes in the DNA in human cells?

None of the vaccines cause changes to the DNA in our cells. They do not have any impact on fertility or contain human cells. These are myths and are completely untrue!

Can I still get coronavirus after having the vaccination?

Yes you can! It can take up to 3 weeks for the protective effect of the vaccination to develop. The immune response varies between individuals so it's still possible to get coronavirus even after having both jabs. People who have had the coronavirus vaccination are much less likely to experience severe COVID-19 symptoms or require hospitalisation. It's very likely that the recovery time is shorter than those who haven't been vaccinated.

Does the vaccine reduce rates of transmission?

There are some data that suggest that rates of transmission are significantly reduced by having the vaccination. More data is required to fully answer this question.

Do I still have to socially distance after having the vaccination?

Yes! No vaccinations are 100% effective so it's very important to continue to observe the coronavirus guidelines and restrictions as set out by the UK Government and devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

We hope this helps a little and provides answers to some of the questions you may have? Please get in touch by emailing Peer.support@plushealth.org.uk

For further information check out this [short video](#) produced by the British HIV Association and Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.