

PARKINSON'S VICTORIA STATEMENT ON COVID-19 VACCINATION AND PARKINSON'S

This statement was first released on 16 February and updated in April 2021. It is based on the review undertaken by the International Movement Disorder Society's Scientific Issues Committee on 12 January 2021 and the Australians Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation in April 2021.

The aim of this statement is to provide information to people living with Parkinson's and Atypical Parkinson's to assist them in making an informed decision regarding COVID-19 vaccination:

Keeping the Parkinson's community safe and informed is a primary objective of Parkinson's Victoria.

Parkinson's Victoria has reviewed available scientific information on the COVID-19 vaccines and the impact on people living with Parkinson's and Atypical Parkinson's around the world.

Parkinson's Victoria is aware that approval for vaccines has occurred or is underway in many countries around the world. In Australia, the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is responsible for reviewing the available data and the approval and safe roll out of vaccination programs.

Vaccination is used to reduce the risk of contracting COVID-19. It is not a treatment for COVID 19. The vaccines have to date been identified as being highly effective in preventing severe and mild forms of COVID-19 infection in the vast majority of people who receive them.

The main community concern is around the speed in which these vaccines have been developed. It is important to understand there has been a concerted global effort to develop these vaccines and they are based on many years of scientific research and published information.

The available types of vaccines developed for the COVID-19 vaccination program (known as mRNA and Vector vaccines) induce an immune response to the COVID-19 virus that do not interact with the currently known (neurodegenerative) pathways that cause Parkinson's symptoms.

There does not appear to be any interaction between the inflammatory processes that are thought to be associated with Parkinson's and the immunity response to these vaccines.

Similar to other vaccines, the COVID-19 vaccination does not interact with current Parkinson's treatments. There have been some reported side effects experienced by people who have received the vaccine, in most instances these are considered as allergic reaction and include mild pain and irritation at the injection site, mild fever, and headache.

The published vaccine phase 3 clinical trial data has shown the incidence of side effects and the impact was the same for people living with Parkinson's compared to the general population.

In rare occasions a syndrome involving blood clots and low platelet counts (Thrombosis and Thrombocytopenia) has developed following use of the Astra Zeneca COVID-19 vaccination has been reported.

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) has reported it has considered the latest data from Europe and the United Kingdom regarding the incidence of blood clots and low platelet counts (thrombosis and thrombocytopenia) and has recommended that people under 50 have the Comirnaty COVID-19 Vaccine (Pfizer).

It is important to note the Astra Zeneca remains seen as highly effective at preventing death and serious illness in people who contract COVID-19 and the incidence of thrombosis and thrombocytopenia is extremely rare.

The ATAGI has recommended the Astra Zeneca vaccination can be used in adults under 50 where the benefits outweigh the risks, and they are able to provide informed consent. This may include people living with long term illness or conditions where they would be compromised if they contracted a COVID 19-infection.

For people in the 1a and 1b groups, the AGTI has recommended if you have had your first COVID-19 vaccination with no side affects, you are safe to have your second dose.

Living with Parkinson's in the community does not increase your risk of contracting COVID-19, however the symptoms of Parkinson's may affect your recovery if you contracted COVID-19.

Parkinson's Victoria recommends you discuss the COVID-19 vaccination with your GP or Neurologist and in line with recommendations of the International Movement Disorder Society and Australian Government advice, encourages people living with Parkinson's to receive the COVID-19 vaccination when it is available.

This recommendation is given because of the overwhelming benefits, with the risks being the same for people living with Parkinson's as with the aged matched general population.

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