

## Who should not take the AstraZeneca vaccine?

- People below the age of 18 years
- People with a fever of 38.5 °C or higher
- People who are confirmed as having COVID-19 at the time for receiving either dose of the vaccine
- People with COVID-19 should wait until they have fully recovered before having the vaccine.

## What are the common side effects of the AstraZeneca vaccine?

Like many other vaccines, there is likely to be a mild response by the body after taking the vaccine. This will likely resolve within 1 to 2 days after. The common reactions to the AstraZeneca vaccine include:

- **Fever**
- **Chills**
- **Nausea**
- **Fatigue**
- **Headache**
- **Joint pain**
- **Muscle aches**
- **Swelling and/or redness at the injection site**
- **Tenderness and/or discomfort at the infection site**
- **General feeling of being unwell**

An individual may have one or a combination of these side effects. These can be managed at home with non-prescription analgesic or antipyretics.

## Are booster doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine needed?

- There is currently no evidence for further doses, once an individual has received the required two doses of this vaccine. Given that both the vaccine and virus are new, research

is on-going. It is possible that this information may change over time as the research unfolds.

## What are the contraindications of the AstraZeneca vaccine?

- People who have had an allergic reaction following the first dose of this vaccine
- Anyone with a body temperature over 38.5°C should postpone vaccination until there is no fever.
- If there is a bleeding problem, bruising, or if taking a blood thinning medicine that weakens the immune system (for example high-dose corticosteroids, immune-suppressants or cancer medicines)

## Can pregnant and breastfeeding women receive the vaccine?

- Pregnant women who fall within the higher risk groups, like having an underlying health condition or a frontline worker, should be vaccinated.
- Any other pregnant woman can choose to have the vaccine but should seek the guidance of her health care provider.
- The World Health Organization does not recommend stopping the breastfeeding of babies after being vaccinated.

### For further information contact:

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# The COVID-19 AstraZeneca Vaccine



Ministry of Health and Wellness  
“Quality Health Care For Life”

Bureau of Health Education  
Ministry of Health, Saint Lucia

- The AstraZeneca Vaccine was developed by Oxford University and AstraZeneca. The AstraZeneca Vaccine currently being used within our national vaccination campaign has been manufactured by the Serum Institute of India, which is the largest vaccine producer globally. Many of the vaccines used in Saint Lucia's National Vaccine Programme are produced by the Serum Institute like the MMR, BCG, and DPT vaccines.
- Though studies of this vaccine are still ongoing, it has obtained approval and pre-qualification for use by World Health Organization. As such, the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on Immunization has developed recommendations for the use of the AstraZeneca Vaccine to allow for its use in containing the COVID-19 pandemic.
- As a result of the pandemic there has been significant health complications for people and the loss of life. The pandemic has also interrupted the normal habits and functions at all levels of society including households, communities, schools, work places, and organizations. This has caused major social, financial and educational disruptions. As a result, there was an urgent need to develop safe and effective vaccines to reduce COVID-19 transmission. By so doing, the negative impact of COVID-19 on mental, physical and social life would also be reduced as vaccine coverage increases.

## What is the COVID-19 AstraZeneca vaccine?

- The AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine is used to protect people against COVID-19 virus. The vaccine stimulates the body's natural defense, that is, it activates the body's immune system. It causes the body to produce antibodies which are the body's fighters against the virus.

- After receiving the vaccine the body's memory cells remember this reaction and this defense it had put up in response. So after this, if an individual who has received the vaccine comes into contact with the virus, their body remembers and reacts, helping to protect the individual from the COVID-19 infection and particularly from developing severe forms of the infection.
- None of the contents of the vaccine causes someone to get COVID-19.

## What are the benefits of having COVID-19 AstraZeneca Vaccine?

When an individual gets the vaccine as prescribed:

- It offers protection against the COVID-19 virus.
- It helps reduce the spread of COVID-19
- It reduces complications from the virus among people at greatest risk like the elderly and people living underlying health conditions
- It reduces the number of severe COVID-19 cases and the need for hospital-based care
- It reduces the number of deaths that result from the virus

## Who should receive the COVID-19 AstraZeneca vaccine?

- People who are 65 years and older. People at high risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus like healthcare workers in clinical settings, paramedics, as well as other first responders and frontline workers.
- People with underlying health conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, HIV, lupus and other chronic underlying medical conditions.
- Other people who are 18 years and older.



- The vaccine is not currently approved for use among people below the age of 18 years.

## How is the AstraZeneca vaccine given?

- The AstraZeneca vaccine is given in two doses (0.5 ml injection) on the upper arm within the shoulder muscle. It has been recommended that the second dose should be given within 4 to 12 weeks after the first dose. Research currently suggests that a longer the dose interval is associated with greater effectiveness of the vaccine. However, each country will determine a suitable timeframe based on its resources and vaccination logistics for the issuing of the second dose. In Saint Lucia, after an individual receives the first dose, an appointment date will be given for the second dose.
- Anyone who gets the first dose should receive the second dose of the vaccine to get the level of protection the vaccine provides. It is recommended that the same vaccine product be used for both doses; in this case, they should both be AstraZeneca. Combining of different vaccine brands is currently not recommended.
- Like other vaccines provided within our health care system, this vaccine is to be given under the supervision of a health care provider. Anyone who gets the vaccine must be observed for a minimum period of fifteen minutes. After this clinical observation is over, the individual should continue to monitor himself or herself at home for any unusual reactions. If this occurs the health care provider or the closest health facility should be contacted immediately.
- The presence of a minor infection such as a cold or a low grade fever should not delay getting vaccinated.

