

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ONCE YOU'VE BEEN VACCINATED

July 2021 War Room Task team



*Here is the low down on vaccinations from the National Institute for Communicable Diseases in South Africa. <https://www.nicd.ac.za>*

### **1. If I have been vaccinated against COVID-19, can I still get the disease?**

Yes, individuals may still be at risk of contracting COVID-19, although the evidence is required to confirm whether COVID-19 vaccines provide protection against asymptomatic or mild disease. Presently it remains unclear whether vaccinated individuals can still spread the disease to others, therefore caution is still required.

**2. What are the most common side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine?**

The most common side effects include tenderness at the injection site, headache, fever, fatigue, chills or diarrhoea. These side effects range from mild to moderate and may feel similar to a flu-like illness for a couple of days.

**3. How long does it take after a COVID-19 vaccination before I am protected?**

With mRNA vaccines (e.g. Pfizer), there is some protection two weeks after the first dose, but the best protection is achieved after the second dose.

There is good data emerging to show that breakthrough asymptomatic infections (COVID-19 infections following vaccination) are uncommon within 10 days (1 in 100) after one dose, and extremely uncommon (1 in 1000) after two doses of an mRNA vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna vaccines). The infections following vaccination are usually mild and do not require hospitalisation.

**4. Do I need to wear a mask and practice physical distancing after vaccination?**

Yes, presently it unclear if COVID-19 vaccines provide complete protection from infection with mild COVID-19, allowing the spread the virus. The evidence shows that COVID-19 vaccines protect from severe disease, hospitalisation and death. Therefore, until enough evidence has been gathered, individuals should wear masks and adhere to the non- pharmaceutical interventions, and physical and social distancing.

**5. If I have been vaccinated against COVID-19, will I be able to spread the virus?**

At the moment there is not enough evidence to confidently answer this question. Scientists are monitoring those who have received vaccines to answer this question.

**6. What should I do if I develop a fever after being given the vaccine, present flu-like symptoms, or experience tenderness at the injection site?**

All these are mild side effects and indicate the expected immune response to the vaccine. You do not need to take any medication, but if you wish you can take paracetamol.

**7. Should I check my antibody status after I have been vaccinated?**

No, it is not necessary. Whilst vaccination will cause almost all people to develop antibodies to the spike protein after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine, a few people will not develop measurable antibodies. However, even

people who do not develop antibodies to the spike protein are still likely to be protected on account of protective cellular responses (T-cell responses).

#### **8. What if my antibody test against SARS-CoV-2 says I am 'not protected' after I have been vaccinated?**

There may be different reasons why antibody tests for SARS-CoV-2 are negative after a person has been vaccinated.

- Antibody tests detect antibodies to different parts of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Some antibody tests detect antibodies to the 'N-protein' (nucleoprotein), and some detect antibody responses to the 'spike protein', whilst some detect both kinds of antibodies. As the vaccine will only cause a person to develop antibodies to the 'S-protein', a person who has received the vaccine will not develop antibodies to the 'N-protein'. Therefore, an antibody test based on the 'N-protein' will be negative.
- Antibodies following vaccination take a few weeks to develop. A negative antibody test may indicate that the test has been done too soon after vaccination.
- A person who has received the vaccine and does not have antibodies to the 'S-protein' even after several weeks may be one of the very few persons who does not develop antibodies at all. Currently experts still believe that these persons have some immune protection against SARS-CoV-2, because of cellular immune responses.

#### **9. In South Africa, do I still need to quarantine if I am exposed to a case of COVID-19 after I have been vaccinated?**

Yes. A vaccinated person should still quarantine (self-isolate) for 10 days following exposure to a case of COVID-19. Although the evidence suggests that people who are vaccinated are less likely to get infection after exposure, at this time point there are too few South Africans are vaccinated to warrant a relaxation in the quarantine/isolation rules.

- To register for your vaccination, click here [sacoronavirus.co.za/evds/](https://sacoronavirus.co.za/evds/)

Share YOUR vaccination experience with us! [warroom@sasseta.org.za](mailto:warroom@sasseta.org.za)



***Stay well. Be safe***

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