



## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### ***BOOSTER VACCINATIONS***

The Health Services Directorate has compiled a few of the most Frequently Asked Questions regarding the COVID-19 Booster vaccinations which may be of help to you when making your decision to receive the Booster vaccination.

#### **Why do I need a booster?**

A COVID-19 booster vaccine dose helps improve the protection you have from your first two doses of the vaccine. It helps give you longer-term protection against getting seriously ill from any of the COVID-19 variants.

#### **Why the switch to Pfizer vaccine when St Helena used AstraZeneca previously?**

The Pfizer vaccine was one of only two vaccines recommended and approved for use as a booster vaccine. Pfizer has also been approved for use in children and young people aged 12-17 and adults 18+. In comparison, the AstraZeneca vaccine is currently only approved for persons aged 18+ for use as first and second doses. By using the Pfizer vaccine, St Helena has now begun to vaccinate persons aged 12+ thereby giving an even greater number of the population protection against COVID-19.

#### **Is the Pfizer vaccine safe?**

The vaccines approved for use in the UK have met strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness set out by the independent Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). Any coronavirus vaccine that is approved must go through all the clinical trials and safety checks that other licensed medicines go through. The MHRA follows international standards of safety.

So far, millions of people have been given a COVID-19 vaccine and reports of serious side effects, such as allergic reactions, have been extremely rare.

#### **Is it mandatory to receive the booster vaccine against COVID-19?**

No, it is not mandatory. However, it is highly encouraged. Having the booster helps give you longer-term protection against getting seriously ill from COVID-19. Protect yourself to help protect St Helena from COVID-19.

#### **When should I receive the booster?**

All persons aged 18+ on St Helena who received their second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine **more than three months ago** are eligible to receive a booster.

#### **I have not previously been vaccinated against COVID-19. What should I do?**

If you would like to receive the COVID-19 vaccine (either a first or second dose) please let the team at the Health Services Directorate know. The team will be happy to assist in making the arrangements for you to be vaccinated.

### **I have an underlying medical condition. Is it OK to have the vaccine?**

The vaccine is deemed safe for most individuals, even those with underlying conditions. If you have concerns around a particular underlying medical condition, please make the team at the Health Services Directorate aware in order to discuss further.

### **What are the common side effects?**

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. Most of these are mild and short-term, and not everyone gets them.

We suggest that following vaccination, you should rest and take paracetamol (following the dose advice on the packaging) to help make you feel better.

If your symptoms seem to get worse or if you are concerned, speak to the General Hospital. If you do seek advice from a doctor or nurse, make sure you tell them about the vaccination so that they can assess you properly.

### **Very common side effects in the first day or two include:**

- Having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where the injection was administered
- Feeling tired
- Headache, aches and chills
- Flu-like symptoms with episodes of shivering and shaking for a day or two.

### **Very rare side effects:**

There have been extremely rare reports of inflammation of the heart (myocarditis) after COVID-19 vaccination. Most people who had this recovered following rest and simple treatments. Whilst extremely rare, you should go to the General Hospital or call 911 if you have any of these symptoms within a few days of being vaccinated:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- A fast-beating, fluttering or pounding heart (palpitations).

### **Will getting vaccinated mean that I will not get COVID-19?**

Like all medicines, no vaccine is completely effective. Some people may still get COVID-19 despite having had a vaccination. However, the advantage of being vaccinated is that it reduces the chances of becoming seriously ill with COVID-19. Research has also shown that being vaccinated reduces the risk of catching or spreading COVID-19. However, as there is still a chance of getting coronavirus even

after being vaccinated, you will need to continue to take sensible precautions such as following best practice for hand and respiratory hygiene.

**Where can I obtain further information?**

Please contact COVID-19 Co-ordinator, Grace Richards, on tel. 22500 or via email: [grace.richards@sainthelena.gov.sh](mailto:grace.richards@sainthelena.gov.sh). Grace will direct you to the appropriate person in the Health Services Directorate.

Let's continue to protect ourselves to protect St Helena.

***#StHelena #COVID-19 #BoosterVaccinationProgramme***

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