

COVID-19 Vaccination Update

Following a review of data from those affected by COVID-19 there is no evidence at this time to suggest that COVID-19 either causes or worsens neuropathy or causes GBS. In previous recent, modern vaccination campaigns, any link to neuropathy is very small if at all. For instance, the influenza vaccine is associated with GBS causation in about 1 in a million vaccinations. The risk of serious illness or death from contracting COVID-19 is about 1:1000 and substantially higher in older age groups.

You may soon be offered a COVID-19 vaccine by your GP or hospital team. In light of this the peripheral nerve team at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery have reviewed the information and data available to help you make an informed decision about receiving the vaccine.

Based on a review of the current vaccines available including their known structures, delivery methods and safety data we would recommend that almost everyone is vaccinated; there are very few exceptions. There is so far no reason to choose one vaccine brand over another and there is no evidence to suggest that the vaccine should be avoided if a person is immunocompromised. We also have no reason to believe that the vaccine would interact with intravenous immunoglobulin. The only caution is in patients who have a known severe allergy (who for instance carry an EpiPen) should take advice from their immunologist before entering a vaccination campaign.

Concerns about contracting COVID or other viral infections from COVID-19 vaccination, or that the vaccine might change the recipient's DNA, are unfounded and incorrect. Where the vaccine is delivered as part of a cold-virus particle (Oxford-AstraZeneca) the virus carrying the COVID molecules has been disabled from replicating and therefore cannot cause disease. In the Pfizer/BioNTeq vaccine the mRNA cannot integrate into your host DNA as that is biologically impossible and no change to DNA of the recipient occurs.

International monitoring of any reported adverse effects is in place, as many medical problems will occur by chance associated with an immunisation campaign of billions of people. Scientists and regulators are alert to establishing any signal of causation that is above that occurring by chance alone.

In light of the above information our recommendation is that all people who are able to receive the vaccine should do so. Further information regarding how the vaccine is given and potential side effects can be found here: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/>

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