

# ASK US

Q AND A'S WITH ALEX & JANE - ALFRED HOSPITAL HTC TEAM

## COVID-19 VACCINE & BLEEDING DISORDERS

**We have all heard that exciting news that the first vaccine has arrived.**

1. What does it mean for people with bleeding disorders?
2. Are there any special instructions for people with bleeding disorders?
3. What will having a vaccine be like?
4. Should I still have the fluvax?

### **1. What does it mean for people with bleeding disorders?**

The vaccine is recommended for people with bleeding disorders and depending on the vaccine rollout you should be contacted when it is your turn to have a vaccine. People with bleeding disorders are not at any increased risk of getting COVID or having complications if they do get COVID, so will be alongside most of the population in terms of when they will be vaccinated. For advice about the rollout please see the following website for more information <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines>

There is no evidence that the vaccine will cause you harm if you have a bleeding disorder, HIV, Hepatitis, or are on steroids or another immunosuppressant medication related to your bleeding disorder.

Both covid vaccines currently

approved in Australia require 2 intramuscular injections scheduled 2 weeks apart for full vaccination; they cannot be given subcutaneously like the Fluvax.

As the vaccine is given into the muscle, patients who have severe or moderate haemophilia should have factor replacement treatment prior to having the vaccine. Plan to have your prophylaxis dose on the day of the injection to avoid extra factor. People who are on the new treatment emicizumab (Hemlibra) do not need to have any additional treatment prior to having the vaccine. As the injection is intramuscular people with bleeding disorders are advised to contact the Haemophilia Treatment Centre, if possible when they are advised they are coming up for covid vaccination to discuss if any additional treatment will be required and if so the dose. This may be different for each person.

### **2. Are there any special instructions for people with bleeding disorders?**

Where possible a smaller needle is used to give the vaccine, such as a 23- or 25-gauge needle. Pressure should be applied for at least 10 minutes after having the vaccine. Rubbing the area should be avoided.

Ice can be applied to the area afterwards for a 10-minute period and may be useful.

After having the vaccine you should perform a self-check and palpitation to look for any haematoma. It is recommended that this self-check be repeated 2-4 hours after the injection.

If there is discomfort in the arm for 1-2 days after the injection is not alarming, unless it worsens or is accompanied by swelling. Anything of concern should be reported to the Haemophilia Treatment Centre.

### **3. What will having a vaccine be like?**

You can read this article from the New York Times about experiences of having the vaccine. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/28/us/vaccine-first-patients-covid.html>

### **4. Should I still have the fluvax?**

Flu Vaccine: Current advice is that people should still have a Fluvax this season as well as the COVID vaccination. The flu vax should be given separately and at least 2 weeks prior to the complete covid (2 doses) vaccination or 2 weeks post the covid vax.

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#### References

Covid -19 Vaccination guidance for people with bleeding disorders. The World Federation of Haemophilia, EAHAD, EHC, NHF <https://news.wfh.org/covid-19-vaccination-guidance-for-people-with-bleeding-disorders/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/28/us/vaccine-first-patients-covid.html>

HFA document <https://www.haemophilia.org.au/publications/news/covid-19-vaccine-faqs>