

COVID-19 VACCINES AND HIV

Are COVID-19 vaccines safe for people living with HIV?

The COVID-19 vaccines under development or approved by regulators are believed to be safe for most people, including people living with HIV.

Before vaccines are licensed for scale-up, national regulators review the data and ensure that they are safe. No data have emerged to cause worry that people living with HIV are at any greater risk from the COVID-19 vaccines than anyone else.

The vaccines include some of the genetic material from SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19), which stimulates our immune systems to make antibodies against the spike protein that SARS-CoV-2 uses to bind to human cells. None of the vaccine approaches under development or approved by regulators use live vaccines and so they should be just as safe in people with damaged immune systems, such as some people living with HIV who are not virally suppressed.

Some of the trials for the vaccines included participants from countries where HIV is more common, such as South Africa, and so will have included a number of people living with HIV. However, some trials excluded people living with HIV as a precautionary measure.

As with most vaccines, mild symptoms in the days after a COVID-19 vaccination, typically a sore arm, but sometimes also a more generalized malaise or a mild fever, have been experienced by some people. A very small number of people

have had a serious allergic reaction, which can be safely managed by keeping people under observation for 15 to 30 minutes after they receive the vaccine. There is no reason to expect that the mild or more severe reactions occur at higher levels among people living with HIV.

Serious side-effects of a vaccine may occur so rarely that they cannot be detected among the first people to be vaccinated. However, surveillance systems are in place to ensure that rare but serious adverse events are reported to the public health authorities and to the manufacturers of the vaccines.

Should people living with HIV be vaccinated against COVID-19?

For people living with HIV, COVID-19 vaccines bring the same benefits as they bring to all individuals and communities—prevention of severe disease due to SARS-CoV-2 and potentially reduced transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. However, until levels of the virus have fallen to very low levels in the population, people should continue to take preventive measures against the SARS-CoV-2 virus (physical distancing, regular hand washing, wearing face coverings) even after vaccination.

People living with HIV should take effective antiretroviral therapy, which not only keeps people healthy but also prevents ongoing transmission of HIV.

COVID-19 vaccines are safe for people living with HIV



The COVID-19 vaccines under development or approved by regulators are believed to be safe for most people, including people living with HIV. There is therefore no reason why people living with HIV should not take the vaccine when offered it.



COVID-19 vaccines bring the same benefits to people living with HIV as they bring to all individuals and communities—prevention of severe disease due to SARS-CoV-2 and potentially reduced transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.



People living with HIV should continue to take effective antiretroviral therapy.



Even after vaccination, people should continue to take preventive measures against the SARS-CoV-2 virus.