Vertaling uit het Nederlands naar het *Engels* van *FAQ stad Antwerpen*

Vaccinations: safety and for whom

(changes up to 13/09/2022)

1. Vaccine safety and protection

Coronavirus vaccines are made according to the same regulatory requirements as other drugs. Available coronavirus vaccines do not contain gelatine. You cannot choose which vaccine you are given.

1.1 Benefits of vaccination

1.1.1 Basic vaccination

Vaccinations can prevent serious illness and saves lives. Thanks to vaccinations, businesses are less likely to be closed and lockdowns are unlikely. So getting vaccinated is important for you and everyone around you.

1. Reduced risk of serious illness.
2. You are less contagious.
3. You help stop the spread of the virus (and possible variants).
4. You are protecting vulnerable people who cannot be vaccinated.
5. You relieve pressure on the healthcare system.

1.1.2 Basic vaccination for children 5 to 11 years of age

All children aged between 5 and 11 can be vaccinated against coronavirus. Vaccination is not mandatory, but it reduces the risk of infection and disease, providing benefits for the child and society.

1. Protect children's health.
2. Protect children's well-being and their developmental opportunities.
3. The vaccination of children protects parents, grandparents and others.
4. Generating immunity through vaccination is better than immunity through infection.
5. Vaccination is safe for children.

1.1.3 Booster vaccination

Studies have shown that the protection of a booster vaccination against serious illness due to coronavirus begins to decline after several months. Therefore, having an additional booster vaccine is highly recommended.

1. Make sure you are better protected from serious illness for longer.
2. Boost your protection against coronavirus infection (temporarily).

1.2 Coronavirus vaccines are safe

Coronavirus vaccines are made according to the same regulatory requirements as other drugs. They have the same pharmaceutical quality, safety and efficacy. The vaccines have been thoroughly tested. Thus, the chance of side effects is limited.

1.2.1 A vaccine is always produced according to the following steps

1. The developer conducts rigorous tests on vaccine quality in terms of purity, ingredients and manufacturing process.
2. The European Medicines Agency (EMA) and other regulators in EU/EEA countries evaluate the vaccine in a scientific manner.
3. The developer tests the vaccine's efficacy with laboratory and animal studies.
4. If these trials go favourably, people (volunteers) test the vaccines:
    a. in 3 clinical trial phases with a larger number of participants each time
    b. according to established procedures and protocols that:
        i. the regulators determine
        ii. the Medical Ethics Committee approves
5. After the testing programme, the developer submits the results to the European Medicines Agency (EMA). The EMA approves the vaccine only when there is enough scientific evidence that the benefits outweigh the risks.

1.2.2 mRNA vaccines don't change your DNA

mRNA vaccines don't change your DNA Studies show that the genetic material from vaccines does not enter our DNA. The vaccine breaks down naturally after doing its good work. An mRNA vaccine is safe because:

- It doesn't impact on your own DNA.
- It is so different from human DNA that it cannot do anything.
- It is broken down in your cells within 10 hours of entering your body.
- Research into RNA vaccines to fight diseases such as cancer, Ebola and rabies (rabies) has been taking place for about 20 years.

1.2.3 Fertility

The vaccine does not affect your fertility. It exclusively targets the protein of the coronavirus. The vaccine does not affect other proteins in your body.

1.2.4 Long-term side effects.

The scientific world has 200 years of experience in making vaccines. And they know that major problems often crop up quickly, within the first few weeks. We are already past that stage. So the chances that you would suffer another severe side effect months or years after you received the vaccine are very slim.

Nevertheless, we can never completely rule it out. This applies not only to the coronavirus vaccine, but to all vaccines and drugs. That is why vaccines and drugs are monitored closely, even after they have been approved. A special surveillance system has even been set up for the coronavirus vaccine. This allows action to be taken quickly if necessary.

1.2.5 The difference with the production of other vaccines

The development and approval of coronavirus vaccines was prioritised at all levels due to the public health emergency. That's why everything progressed faster.

The different phases of vaccine development were allowed to overlap. This allowed Phase 3 studies to start at the same time as Phase 2. The test groups were larger and more diverse than in other testing studies.

The EMA used a special task force of experts. They gave priority to coronavirus assessment procedures. Thus, rapid evaluation and reliable scientific advice were possible.

1.3 Religion and vaccination

Vaccinations are permitted for people who adhere to Islam or Judaism.

1.3.1 Gelatine

Available coronavirus vaccines do not contain gelatine.

Gelatine is a protein derived from pig waste. For Jews and Muslims, pork is forbidden.

Both faiths allow vaccines, even if they contain gelatine:

- For Jews: because you don't take the vaccine by mouth.
- For Muslims: because the gelatine is processed so you can consider it pure.

1.3.2 Ramadan

The Muslim Executive (EMB) ruled that Muslims are allowed to have their vaccinations during Ramadan.

1.4 You cannot choose which vaccine you are given.

Your name is associated with a code. That code is linked to a vaccine type available to you.

2. Who can (not) be vaccinated

2.1 You are pregnant or are actively trying to get pregnant

It is best for pregnant women to be vaccinated with the basic vaccine and booster vaccine.

The Supreme Health Council strongly recommends that pregnant women are vaccinated, regardless of the pregnancy stage. Indeed, pregnant women who become infected with COVID-19 are at higher risk of serious illness and preterm delivery, with the associated health risks to the baby. You are strongly advised to have the vaccination, if you are **trying to get pregnant**.

2.2 You are breastfeeding

You may be vaccinated with the basic vaccine and booster vaccine against coronavirus.

You should not interrupt breastfeeding.

2.3 You are sick

If you have symptoms of illness with or without a fever (more than 38 degrees Celsius), it is better not to get vaccinated.

Postpone your vaccination until 2 weeks after you recover. Seek advice from your doctor if in doubt.

2.4 You are infected with the coronavirus

Do not get vaccinated if you are infected with coronavirus.

- Do you have any complaints or symptoms? You can have your vaccine from 14 days after you no longer have coronavirus symptoms.
- No longer suffering from any symptoms? You can have your vaccine from 14 days after the test that showed you had coronavirus.

2.5 You have a chronic illness

If you have a serious or long-term illness, it is better to get vaccinated.

The vaccination protects you from serious complications from the virus.

Seek advice from your doctor if in doubt.

2.6 You have (had) cancer

If you have had cancer, you may be vaccinated with the basic vaccine and booster vaccine.

If you are having treatment, you may be vaccinated with the basic vaccine and booster vaccine.

Discuss the most appropriate time for your vaccination with your oncologist or doctor. This is to maximise the efficacy of the vaccine.

2.7 You are an at-risk patient

As a high-risk patient, you are a priority for the coronavirus vaccine.

Because, if you become infected with coronavirus, your symptoms may be much worse than normal. At-risk patients receive an invitation from the Flemish government to go to a vaccination centre

If you have any of these (underlying) conditions, you are a high-risk patient:

- patients aged 18 to 64 with:
    - chronic severe respiratory diseases
    - chronic cardiovascular diseases
    - chronic disorders of the nervous system, including dementia
    - type I or II diabetes
    - cancer (tumours) diagnosed no more than 5 years ago
    - chronic kidney disease for at least 3 months*
    - chronic liver disease for at least 6 months*
    - haematological cancers (e.g. leukaemia)*
    - obesity (BMI ≥30 kg/m²)
    - hypertension
    - Down's syndrome
    - transplant patients (including those on the waiting list)*
    - impaired immune system i.e. suffering from immunodeficiency
    - active HIV/AIDS

    - rare diseases if they have a serious impact on functioning (cardiac, neurological, pulmonary) (see Orphanet list)

    * For these conditions, vaccination is organised in consultation with the attending specialist, who coordinates with the general practitioner.

- patients aged 16 to 17 with:
    - chronic kidney disease for at least 3 months*
    - chronic liver disease for at least 6 months*
    - haematological cancers (e.g. leukaemia)
    - Down's syndrome
    - transplant patients (including those on the waiting list)
    - impaired immune system i.e. suffering from immunodeficiency or using immunosuppressants
    - active HIV/AIDS
    - some rare conditions (see Orphanet list)

The health insurance companies have the necessary data on people with these conditions. That data is supplemented by information from family physicians. This is how a list is compiled.

No distinction is made between the various conditions. All diseases are considered equally important. The invitations are sent out by age, from old to young.

2.8 You have an allergy

Have you ever had an immediate or severe allergic reaction after a previous vaccine? Or did you need urgent medical attention after taking medication? If so, be sure to discuss this with your doctor.

Your doctor will assess your allergies and, if necessary, refer you for evaluation by an allergist or for vaccination at the hospital.

An allergy to other substances is not a problem:

- The vaccines do not contain preservatives.
- The cap of the vaccine vial is not made of latex.

2.9 You are in quarantine

Postpone vaccination until after the quarantine period.