

Vaccine against coronavirus

– COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca (AstraZeneca)

Information to those who have been offered this vaccine

The novel coronavirus causes respiratory tract infection. Many people experience either mild or no symptoms, but some may become seriously ill. The elderly, and those who already have certain other diseases from before are at greatest risk of a serious disease course or death. The goal of the coronavirus vaccine is to protect life and health.

Who should have the coronavirus vaccine?

People who are recommended to receive this vaccine through the national immunisation programme will be offered this vaccine when it is their turn in the priority queue. The vaccine is free and is voluntary. It will be offered to people staying in Norway.

How do I get the vaccine?

Check the website of your municipality for information about who is being offered the vaccine, how vaccination is being organised and when it will take place.

How is this vaccine given?

The vaccine is injected into the upper arm. You will receive two doses of vaccine 9-12 weeks apart. It is important that you take the second dose at the scheduled time. Before you receive the vaccine, you will be asked if you are feeling well and if you have had any reactions to other vaccines you have had. Remember to say if you have any allergies, are pregnant, use medicines or have other health problems. It is common to delay vaccination with acute illness and a fever above 38 °C. After you have had the vaccine, you will be asked to wait for 20 minutes.

How does this vaccine work?

The vaccine uses a harmless virus (cold virus) that helps transport the recipe for the spikes on the coronavirus into the body. The body makes copies of these spikes that the immune system can practise on. In this way, the immune system learns to recognise the coronavirus spikes and can defend the body if it becomes infected with the virus.

The transport virus cannot multiply in the body and is quickly broken down. The vaccine cannot cause coronavirus disease or any other infectious disease. The coronavirus vaccine acts to prevent disease. It cannot cure an ongoing illness.

This method of making vaccines is already used in Ebola vaccines.

How well does this vaccine work?

The vaccine protects against disease caused by the new coronavirus. Two weeks after the second dose, an average of 60 % of those vaccinated in the studies were protected against COVID-19 disease. However, the protection seemed to be higher if the interval between the two doses was 9 weeks or more. The studies indicate that the vaccine also provides protection

against severe COVID-19 disease that requires hospital treatment. We do not yet know how long the protection will last. If the protection decreases over time, booster doses may be necessary. Since the vaccine prevents disease, it will also prevent transmission, but we do not yet know to what extent. Therefore, it is important to continue to follow the current infection control advice.

Side effects

From the studies that have been performed, we have good knowledge of common and less common side effects among those who are vaccinated. We cannot rule out rare side effects, or side effects that only appear long after vaccination. Most side effects occurred in the first few days after vaccination, and passed within a few days:

- More than half of those vaccinated experienced pain at the injection site.
- Other common side effects are feeling unwell, tiredness, headache, muscle and joint pain, chills, nausea and fever.
- The side effects are milder and less frequent after dose 2.

In most cases, the side effects were mild or moderate. Fewer than 5 % experienced more bothersome side effects that were harmless, but that impacted their daily life for the few days they lasted.

What do I do if I get side effects?

If you experience unexpected, severe or prolonged symptoms that you think may be due to the vaccine, contact your doctor or another healthcare worker for assessment and advice. Healthcare workers have a duty to report any serious or unexpected reactions that they suspect are due to a vaccine. You can also send in a notification yourself via helsenorge.no

Conditional approval

This coronavirus vaccine has been tested in large studies where several thousand people received the vaccine. The studies were carried out in the same way as for other vaccines, but the observation time is shorter. The medicine regulatory authorities have given the vaccine a conditional approval. This means that there are enough data to assess that the benefit of the vaccine far outweighs the risk, but that the vaccine producer must continue the studies and continuously provide data to the medicine regulatory authorities when they become available.

Which vaccine have I received?

When you have been given a coronavirus vaccine, it will be registered in the Norwegian Immunisation Registry, SYSVAK. You can access your information at helsenorge.no

Do you want to know more?

Please ask your doctor or other healthcare worker or visit the Norwegian Institute of Public Health's website at fhi.no/cvp