



The Voice of Transplantation in the UK

BRITISH TRANSPLANTATION SOCIETY LATEST ADVICE ON COVID-19 VACCINATION IN TRANSPLANT RECIPIENTS AND PATIENTS WAITING FOR A TRANSPLANT
4th January 2022

The NHS recommends that vaccination, including booster doses, is the best protection for everyone from severe disease, risk of hospitalisation and death due to COVID-19.

Recipients of solid organ and islet transplants and patients listed for a transplant were not included in vaccination trials in the UK and there is uncertainty about the level of protection from vaccination in these groups in comparison with healthy volunteers and the general population.

In common with other vaccines, the concern is that the COVID-19 vaccine may not be as effective for patients who are more vulnerable to infection, including people with underlying health conditions and those who take immunosuppressant medications.

The situation is evolving rapidly and we are still learning about the disease, its impact on patients and adjusting or introducing treatments as they become available.

The advice to patients remains the same:

- Get vaccinated because the benefit of vaccination still outweighs the risk of dying from the disease in those who are unvaccinated
- Where possible, get vaccinated before transplantation to avoid impact of immunosuppression on vaccine efficacy
- A three-vaccine course followed by a booster vaccine is likely to provide the highest immunological protection against COVID-19 from vaccination for transplant patients
- Whilst further studies on the effectiveness of the third and fourth doses of vaccine are awaited, the best protection against COVID-19 for everyone is non pharmaceutical interventions i.e., social distancing, wearing face coverings and regular hand washing
- Encourage close contacts of transplant patients to be fully vaccinated and boosted
- Get tested as soon as possible if they or anyone close to them has symptoms suggestive of COVID-19
- In the event of a positive test for COVID-19, contact their transplant team immediately so that appropriate treatment can be commenced early and to maximum effect

Initial clinical trials indicated that Pfizer provided people with a stronger immune response than other vaccines. However, a recent in-depth analysis performed by NHS Blood and Transplant combining data from the **UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA)**, which identifies patients testing positive for COVID-19, the **National Immunisation Registry** and **NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) Transplant Registry** has shown that, for transplant patients, neither vaccine offers protection against catching the disease but once they have tested positive for

COVID-19, Oxford AstraZeneca is 31% more effective in reducing the risk of dying from the disease compared to those who are unvaccinated¹. The reason for the difference between two doses of AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccine is currently unexplained but studies on third and fourth dose effects in transplant patients will be available in early summer of 2022 and data collection is already in progress.

In the midst of continued uncertainty, it is difficult for clinicians to appropriately advise patients and for patients to live the life they want to live. However, new treatments for COVID-19 disease have recently been approved, including neutralising monoclonal antibodies and new anti-viral therapies. This is a positive step forward for everyone, including transplant recipients. Clinical management guidance for transplant patients is regularly updated with information about the availability of these treatments, how they can be accessed and advice about timing of administration after a positive test to maximise effectiveness (see b under further advice and information).

- 1. Real-world Effectiveness of the Pfizer-BioNTech BNT162b2 and Oxford-AstraZeneca ChAdOx1-S Vaccines Against SARS-CoV-2 in Solid Organ and Islet Transplant Recipients**, Callaghan, Chris J. PhD¹; Mumford, Lisa MSc¹; Curtis, Rebecca M. K. BSc¹; Williams, Sarah V. MFPH²; Whitaker, Heather PhD²; Andrews, Nick PhD²; Lopez Bernal, Jamie PhD²; Ushiro-Lumb, Ines FRCP¹; Pettigrew, Gavin J. MD¹; Thorburn, Douglas FRCP¹; Forsythe, John L. R. FRCS¹; Ramanan, Rommel FRCP¹ on behalf of the NHSBT Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation Clinical Team
Transplantation: [January 04, 2022 - Volume - Issue -](#)
doi: 10.1097/TP.0000000000004059
https://journals.lww.com/transplantjournal/Abstract/9000/Real_world_Effectiveness_of_the_Pfizer_BioNTech.95099.aspx
- 2. Simple Vaccination Is not Enough for the Transplant Recipient**
Chapman, Jeremy R. FRCP¹; Wigmore, Stephen J. FRSE²
Transplantation: [January 04, 2022 - Volume - Issue -](#)
doi: 10.1097/TP.0000000000004064
https://journals.lww.com/transplantjournal/Citation/9000/Simple_Vaccination_Is_not_Enough_for_the.95098.aspx

Further advice and information:

- a. COVID-19 vaccine – Q&As for clinicians and patients <https://www.odt.nhs.uk/covid-19-advice-for-clinicians/> and <https://bts.org.uk/information-resources/covid-19-information/>
- b. Guidance on the management of transplant recipients diagnosed with or suspected of having COVID19 <https://bts.org.uk/information-resources/covid-19-information/>
- c. Government Coronavirus Advice <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do>
- d. NHS advice on Coronavirus vaccination <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/>