

Jag har MS och får sjukdomsmodifierande behandling – ska jag vaccinera mig mot covid-19?

COVID-19 vaccination could signal the beginning of the end of a very challenging year; however, the amount of conflicting information online can be confusing. To better understand how to manage COVID-19 with your MS treatment, read our 'FAQs' below, along with responses from our expert group.

1 Do I have a higher risk of catching COVID-19 because I have MS?

It is currently unknown whether MS is a risk factor for becoming infected with COVID-19, but what we do know is that, to catch COVID-19, you would need to be exposed to it. Therefore, taking practical steps to minimise your exposure to the virus is crucial for reducing your risk of becoming infected. Regular and thorough hand washing, mask wearing and social distancing will help you to minimise your chances of catching COVID-19.

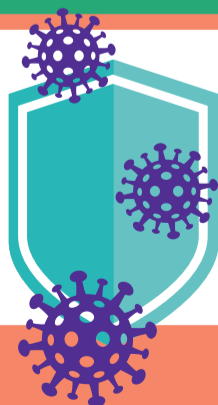


2 If I get COVID-19, will it be worse for me?

Knowledge about how COVID-19 may affect people with MS is currently limited. To date, data collected on people with MS who have been exposed to COVID-19 do not seem to indicate a more severe infection; however, it is advised that some MS treatments are not taken during infection as a precaution. Treatment decisions should be made between you and your healthcare team, so if you suspect you might have COVID-19, make sure you speak with your doctor before stopping or delaying your treatment.

3 I'm taking interferon treatment for my MS. Does it protect me against COVID-19?

There is currently no evidence to show that disease-modifying treatments for MS protect against COVID-19. The most effective, safe and reliable way to get protected against COVID-19 is to get vaccinated.



4 How do the COVID-19 vaccines work?

Although some vaccinations contain live or weakened versions of viruses, the COVID-19 vaccines do not, and so cannot cause you to become infected with COVID-19. However, by introducing a small unique part of the virus to your body, it allows your immune system to do some 'target practice' without the need to be directly exposed to the virus. As your immune system will recognize that the vaccine structures are not part of your own body, it will start an immune response, building up an army of dedicated immune cells and antibodies to fight the perceived infection. This means that if you were to catch COVID-19, your body will remember that it has seen parts of the virus before, and will already have a defence mechanism in place.



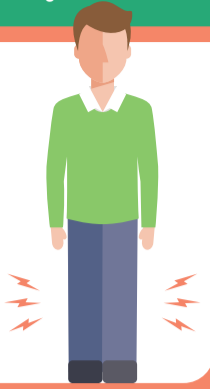
5 How safe are the COVID-19 vaccines; will they affect my DNA?

Although the COVID-19 vaccines have been developed very quickly, they have gone through the same rigorous testing process that all medicines go through. There is a common misconception that the vaccines will change a person's DNA, and although some do contain 'mRNA', which is a type of genetic material, this does not interfere with, or have any impact on your own DNA. This mRNA is used to instruct the cells in your body to make a unique protein called 'spike' that is found on the virus that causes COVID-19. This protein then sticks to the surface of your cells, and, as your immune system will recognize that the vaccine structures are not part of your own body, it will start an immune response, building up an army of dedicated immune cells and antibodies to fight the perceived infection. Your body will then break down the mRNA, but the antibodies stay, so, if you were to catch COVID-19, your body will remember that it has seen this protein before, and will already have a defence mechanism in place.



6 Will the COVID-19 vaccine affect the progression of my MS or trigger a relapse?

There is no evidence to show that COVID-19 vaccination will trigger an MS relapse. Some people may find they feel hot or feverish for a little while after the injection, which might make an MS symptom worsen temporarily. However, this should return to normal after a few days.



7 Should I stop taking or change my MS treatment in order to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

In most cases, there is no need to stop or switch your MS treatment in order to get vaccinated against COVID-19. Your doctor will schedule the vaccine around your disease-modifying treatment, so make sure to speak to your healthcare team before making any changes.

8 Will the COVID-19 vaccine stop my MS treatment from working?

There is no evidence to suggest that any of the current COVID-19 vaccines will interfere with the efficacy of your MS treatment. However, your MS treatment could reduce your immune response to the vaccine. The best course of action is to discuss any concerns you may have with your healthcare team.



9 Will my MS treatment stop the vaccine from working?

It is possible that some disease-modifying treatments may cause the person with MS to have a less effective immune response to the vaccine, but you should be reassured that you could still be at least partially protected. In many situations, even a partial response to a vaccine is enough to keep you from becoming ill. For example, flu vaccinations are only about 60-70% effective, but most people do not catch flu. Remember: Some protection is better than no protection!

10 As a person with MS, does it matter which type of COVID-19 vaccine I get if I have a choice?

Currently, only the use of live vaccines is restricted in people taking disease-modifying treatments for MS. None of the authorized and recommended COVID-19 vaccines, or COVID-19 vaccines currently in development, are live vaccines, nor do they contain weakened versions of the COVID-19 virus. Therefore, the best advice is to take the vaccine which is offered to you first, and get vaccinated as soon as you can. Please speak with your doctor about when you should get the COVID-19 vaccine. Your doctor will know how to adapt your vaccination schedule to your MS treatment plan.

11 What precautions do I need to take in between doses of the COVID-19 vaccine?

Most people with MS will have a normal response to the vaccine and be well-protected. However, it is possible that some disease-modifying treatments may cause the person with MS to have a less effective immune response to the vaccine. It is therefore important that everyone continues to follow guidelines related to social distancing and wearing face coverings until restrictions are lifted for everyone.

12 Will I be monitored differently after having the COVID-19 vaccine, due to my MS?

As with any vaccination, anyone who receives a COVID-19 vaccine will be monitored on site for a short time afterwards in case of any immediate side effects or allergic reactions. Some people might have minor symptoms such as pain, swelling, headache or feeling hot or feverish for a little while after the injection. For a person with MS, this might make an MS symptom worsen temporarily but any changes should subside after a few days. If your side effects are worrying you or do not seem to be going away, contact your doctor for advice.



Provided by the experts from the MS in the 21st Century initiative

