

# Covid-19 vaccination in MS

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The current recommendation is that all adults with MS be vaccinated against Covid-19. This is particularly important for older people or those with significant neurological disability.

Furthermore, if you have other conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, obesity, hypertension, then you are more at risk of a serious Covid infection.

You will not be at an increased risk of an MS relapse when you receive the Covid vaccine.

Even though many people with MS are taking immunosuppressive treatment, the vaccine will still work. The available vaccines in Australia have been TGA approved, including the Pfizer/BioNTech and Astra/Zeneca vaccines. If you are on more effective MS therapies such as recent administration of Ocrevus, Mavenclad, Tysabri and Lemtrada, then vaccine effectiveness may be reduced. However you will still mount an immune response to the Covid vaccine and therefore we expect you to be protected against a serious Covid infection. Whichever of the vaccines is offered to you, we suggest that you be vaccinated as soon as possible.

For those who are on current treatment with Ocrevus, Mavenclad or Lemtrada, we suggest if possible, have your first Covid vaccination at least 4-6 weeks before your next MS treatment cycle. If you are in doubt, discuss the timing of vaccination with your neurologist or text MS nurse Michelle Allan on 0416 290 101. The 2<sup>nd</sup> vaccine jab should be at least 1 month after MS treatment. Do not delay MS treatment while waiting for vaccination.

If you are on Tysabri, Gilenya, Tecfidera, Aubagio, an interferon injection or Copaxone, then be vaccinated with whichever vaccine is offered as soon as it is available. Please do not delay your MS treatment while waiting to be vaccinated. The potential for a disabling MS relapse is your greatest risk during the pandemic.

Many are hesitant to be vaccinated because of the rapid pace of vaccine development and approval. But remember, this process has been rapid because of the high worldwide incidence of serious infection and death. All of the approved vaccines have been through all 3 trial phases, like any other new medication or vaccine. The phase 3 vaccine trials have involved tens of thousands of people to prove that they work. The vaccines are safe and have been TGA approved in Australia. Furthermore, tens of millions of people around the world have already received these Covid vaccines. The risk of a serious side effect is very low.

In other words the clinical benefit of vaccination far outweighs the small risk.

Finally, please don't forget to have your usual influenza vaccine, but on a different day to Covid vaccination.