

# 1 Messages for renal staff

## Covid-19 Vaccine

- People with kidney disease have been severely affected by COVID-19 with high rates of infection, critical illness and death. Haemodialysis patients are at greatest risk of infection as they travel to and from dialysis three times per week.
- There are now vaccines available and a vaccination programme has started. This offers potential lifesaving protection to many clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) patients.
- People with kidney disease will have many questions about how well the vaccines work for kidney patients, their safety, and how they will be rolled out.
- It is important as health care professionals that we are clear and consistent in our messaging in promoting COVID-19 vaccination for all kidney patients.

### The Vaccines are safe and effective

**01** In clinical trials, the Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA vaccine and the Oxford/AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccines were highly effective at preventing infection. It is possible that they are not as efficient in people with kidney disease and people taking immunosuppressants, but they are expected to work well enough to prevent severe infection and so worthwhile given the high risk to kidney patients from COVID-19.

**02** The vaccines require two doses. In the trials, patients were given the second dose between 3 and 5 weeks after the first dose. The data suggests that a good level of immunity is achieved after the first dose and so the UK government has decided to delay the second dose in many people to 8-12 weeks after the first dose to ensure as many people as possible get their first dose quickly. All patients will eventually receive the second dose which should make the immunity last for longer, though we don't yet know how long it will last for. All patients should receive the same make of vaccine for the second dose that they received for the first dose.

**03** No differences in outcomes have been found in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups.

**04** The Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA vaccine does not contain any virus particles, but does contain the gene for the coronavirus spike protein in a fatty envelope that allows cells to produce this protein and the body to develop immunity to the coronavirus. The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is a harmless adenovirus that has had the coronavirus spike protein gene added into it which triggers immunity to the coronavirus. This virus has been disabled so it cannot replicate. People cannot catch COVID-19 from the vaccine nor pass it on to others.

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**05** Vaccines are only approved for use once they have passed stringent safety tests.

**06** There are some side effects, but these are mild and limited to a sore arm or feeling slightly unwell. We don't yet know if there will be any long-term side effects, but we do not anticipate any. Side effects to other vaccines generally occur in the first 1-2 months and so it is reassuring that no major ones have been identified with the Covid vaccinations so far. There is no evidence that any vaccine causes infertility.

**07** Two people in the UK have had an allergic reaction to the Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA vaccine so people with a history of allergy to any component of this vaccine or a history of immediate onset-anaphylaxis to multiple classes of drugs or an unexplained anaphylaxis should not be vaccinated with the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine. The AstraZeneca vaccine can be used as an alternative (if not otherwise contraindicated). People with allergies to food, an identified drug or other vaccine, or an insect sting can still have any of the Covid-19 vaccines.

### Who will be offered the vaccine and when?

- The government has devised a priority list of who should receive the vaccine and when.
- Vaccination has commenced for everyone over 80 years, including kidney patients of this age. Care home residents, care home staff and all healthcare professionals are also currently being vaccinated. The UK government is aiming to offer the first vaccine dose to anyone over 70 and people who are CEV by 15th February.
- The joint kidney professional bodies have requested that in-centre haemodialysis patients should receive the vaccination as a priority followed by all other renal patients classified as CEV. We are currently awaiting confirmation and will let colleagues know as soon as any renal patients are re-prioritised.
- All patient-facing staff working in kidney care will receive priority access to first dose COVID-19 vaccination (including those who work in commercially run dialysis units and are therefore not directly employed by the NHS) in-line with the government guidance.

## Please remember

- Ask eligible patients if they have received the vaccine as part of your 'meet and greet' - they may have received it through their GP.
- Make sure it has been logged on the database
- Make sure all patients who are classified as clinically extremely vulnerable are registered centrally.
- Be positive, clear and consistent in your response to patients who ask advice about being vaccinated.
- Explain to them the importance of getting vaccinated because of the risks of COVID-19 infection.
- Refer them to the Kidney Care UK website or an advocate within your unit