

Message regarding the AstraZeneca vaccine

April 21, 2021

INFORMATION FOR YOUR PRACTICE

The following message can be used/adapted by your practice to update patients on use of the AstraZeneca vaccine, including questions about safety.

Dear Patients,

Eligibility for the **AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccine** has been expanded to include those **40 and older**. This is great news as it means more Ontarians will be able to have the protection offered through this vaccine.

With Ontario facing the most devastating wave of COVID-19 yet, and more contagious variant strains circulating, it is so important that you protect yourself and that includes through vaccination. **[I/we] are encouraging you to get vaccinated as soon as you can**. If you still have questions after reading this information, please call our office.

- **Take the first vaccine offered to you** – Waiting for your ‘preferred’ vaccine risks potentially getting COVID-19 and associated illness. To best protect yourself and others, **[I/we]** agree that **the best COVID-19 vaccine is the one that reaches your arm first**. Only COVID-19 vaccines that Health Canada determines to be safe and effective are approved for use, and **all are highly effective in preventing severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19, including AstraZeneca**. This is the same advice we as family doctors give to our own family members and loved ones.
- **The benefits clearly outweigh the risks** – There is a lot of information out there. As you weigh the risk of potential vaccine side effects against the chance of contracting COVID-19 and perhaps becoming seriously ill or dying from the virus, please remember this: **incidents of serious clotting from the AZ vaccine are extremely rare, these can be treated, and overall, the benefits of the AZ vaccine far outweigh the risks**. This [article](#) has a good summary.

A **previous blood clot or family history of blood clots does not increase the risks** of clotting from the AZ vaccine – in fact, COVID-19 infection can cause blood clots. See [more information](#) from Thrombosis Canada.

- **Healthcare professionals are aware of, and ready to respond as needed to side effects** – This [information for after your vaccine](#) includes a list of possible side effects. Within the first day or two of COVID-19 vaccination, they include arm pain and flu-like symptoms. Health Canada advises patients to be aware of the **remote** possibility of serious side effects, including clots after AZ vaccination, and to seek immediate medical attention and mention their vaccination if symptoms occur after getting the vaccine.

In the 4 to 20 days following AZ vaccination, particular signs to watch for are:

- shortness of breath
- pain in the chest
- persistent abdominal pain
- swelling or coldness in an arm or leg
- severe or worsening headaches or blurred vision
- multiple small bruises, red or purple spots, or blood blisters under the skin.

- **Please book your vaccination appointment as soon as you are eligible** – [add relevant vaccination info from your region].

Our office is open to you, by phone, by video or in person to answer any vaccination questions. We are here to help keep you safe and get through this pandemic together.

Best,