

The COVID-19 Vaccine and your IBD:

The COVID-19 vaccine is low risk, and is the best way to protect yourself and others against coronavirus. For most patients with IBD (with the exception of pregnant patients and patients under the age of 16) vaccination should be given at the first opportunity.

Can people with IBD have the COVID-19 Vaccine?

Yes. Having Crohn's or Colitis, or taking any medicine to treat your condition, will not stop you from being able to have the COVID-19 vaccine. All the available vaccines are suitable for people taking biologics, steroids or immunosuppressants, as well as people who have a stoma or pouch. You don't need to leave a gap between your vaccine and when you take your biologic medicine - they can both be taken on the same day if needed. Your vaccine will still be just as safe and just as effective if taken at the same time as your biologic medicine.

If you are younger than 16 or pregnant COVID-19 vaccination is not currently recommended, although this may change as we get more information about vaccination in these patient groups. If you have a history of anaphylaxis please discuss this with your IBD specialist prior to vaccination.

Is the Vaccine Safe?

As with any medicine or vaccine, there is a small risk of side effects, including pain at the injection site, fatigue, feeling achy or sick (nausea). There is no evidence to suggest that having Crohn's or Colitis, or taking any medicine to treat your condition, increases your risk of side effects. When weighing up the risk of side effects of the vaccine, it's also important to also consider the risks of complications from COVID-19 if you were to catch the virus. Many people with IBD have now been safely vaccinated across the world (in the UK, Europe, the USA and Israel as well as many other countries).

Will the Covid-19 Vaccine work?

Yes - having Crohn's or Colitis does not make the vaccine any less effective for you. If you are on 5-ASA medication (such as mesalazine, pentasa or salofalk), or no medication at all, you can expect the vaccine to work just as well as it does for the general population.

If you take an immunosuppressant medicine, the vaccine may be slightly less effective. This is because some immunosuppressants may make your body less able to defend itself against viruses and other harmful germs - this is called the immune response. We still don't know which medicines, if any, will reduce the effectiveness of the coronavirus vaccine, or to what extent. There is ongoing research looking at this. **This does not mean you should stop your treatment. Stopping treatment can lead to a flare of your Crohn's or Colitis, which puts you at greater risk from serious complications of COVID-19. Even if the COVID-19 vaccine works slightly less well for you, it will still offer greater protection than not having the vaccine.**

Which Covid-19 Vaccine is Best for Patients with IBD?

All the coronavirus vaccines that are licensed or in the final stages of testing are considered suitable for people with Crohn's or Colitis, as they are not live vaccines. Therefore having Crohn's or Colitis, or taking medicine to treat your condition, will not affect which coronavirus vaccine is best for you. You should have whichever vaccine you are offered.