



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

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**BY EMAIL ONLY**

**Deputy Seán Canney**

Dáil Éireann  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

23/06/2021

**PQ 21399-21 Re: AstraZeneca - To ask the Minister for Health the options open to persons aged 60 to 69 years of age who do not want to receive a vaccine (details supplied) but are anxious to be vaccinated; when they can expect to receive a vaccine; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -**

Dear Deputy Canney

Thank you for your email regarding the suitability of the Vaxzevria COVID-19 vaccine (also called the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine).

Firstly, I would like to outline the current situation with the Vaxzevria COVID-19 vaccine. In April 2021, following reports of a small number of clotting events in patients who had recently received the Vaxzevria vaccine from multiple European countries (not including Ireland), the European Medicines Agency's (EMA) safety committee commenced an investigation to assess whether any link between these events and the vaccine could be shown. It's important to state at this point that the reported adverse events were a very particular presentation; a combination of clots in the blood supply for the brain or the gut and also a decrease in a type of blood cell called platelets and were extremely rare (between 4-10 cases per million people). The majority of these adverse events were seen in women aged under 60 and no specific risk factors for developing these side effects was shown.

Following their investigations, the EMA stated that while it was plausible that these events were caused by the Vaxzevria vaccine, they are extremely rare and the overall benefits of the Vaxzevria vaccine in preventing COVID-19 far outweighed the risk of side-effects. Taking these findings into account, the National Immunisation Advisory Committee in Ireland decided to limit the use of Vaxzevria vaccine to those aged 50 years and older. This is because we have evidence that persons aged over 50 have a much higher risk of severe outcomes (including ICU admission and death) from COVID-19 than of developing this extremely rare side effect. This evidence is even stronger in persons aged over 65.

The HSE has sought advice from the National Coagulation Centre and they have advised that no previous history of clotting disorders, nor a history of heparin induced thrombocytopenia is a contraindication to receiving the Vaxzevria vaccine. The only contraindication to receiving Vaxzevria vaccine is an allergy to the vaccine or any of its constituents. It is currently not possible to choose which COVID-19 vaccine to receive and we would strongly advise that people avail of the first vaccine that is offered to protect her from COVID-19 disease as soon as possible.

I hope this provides you with assistance.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sharon Hayden".

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Sharon Hayden  
General Manager  
Office of the CCO