

## COVID-19 - Vaccine anxiety

Over the last six months one of the most prevalent topics around COVID-19 and seeing an end to the pandemic has been the implementation of the vaccine rollout.

People across the World raise questions; 'how are they developed so quickly?', 'is the testing rigorous enough?', and 'what will the long-term effects on humans be?' Mix that in with the hype from the media and a healthy dose of conspiracy theories and it is enough to trigger fears and anxieties in anyone.

It is important to remain level headed and optimistic around the vaccines. So, whether it is someone saying the testing hasn't been properly carried out, maybe that there are still too many unknowns, or if it is a newspaper that has reported that someone has had an adverse reaction to the vaccine; it is extremely important to always ensure you are getting your information from a reliable source.

Make sure you read up on the questions you are asking, but always ensure you use reputable sources. Try not to listen to the headlines that may have been twisted or based on someone's opinion. Weigh up the overall benefits against the risks and see where you personally stand on that.

### Tips on coping with fear and anxiety

- **Understand your anxieties** – write down what it is about the vaccine that you are worried about.
- **Arm yourself with trustworthy information** – Information and guidance on vaccines is constantly evolving. So it is understandable if you are feeling unsure what is what. Arming yourself with the correct facts will help you feel confident that you know useful information about the vaccines and this can help ease your worries. But if watching or reading the news about coronavirus makes you feel anxious, limit this to once a day. It is important to make sure the information and advice you are reading comes from sources that are up-to-date, trustworthy and evidence-based. Keep up to-date with the latest guidance on Coronavirus at [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)
- **Look after your wellbeing** - Taking care of your physical health can help you to cope with feelings of anxiety and stressful situations when they arise. Try to eat a healthy diet, limit alcohol, exercise regularly and get good-quality sleep. Remember to take some time out to look after yourself. Try a few different things until you find what works for you. You could try reading a book, practise mindfulness, get creative, bake or go outdoors for some exercise. Spending time outside in green, open spaces can have positive effects on both your physical and mental wellbeing.
- **Make time for "worries"** - If your worry feels overwhelming and takes over your day, put aside time for "worry time" to go through your concerns each day. Write them down or confide in a friend or loved one, or consider calling Care first for some support in the moment.

- **Shift your focus** - Some people find relaxation, massage, exercise, mindfulness or breathing exercises helpful. They reduce tension and focus our awareness on the present moment.
- **Speak to someone you trust** - Share your fears and concerns with someone you feel comfortable talking to. The chances are they're experiencing similar feelings. Sharing how you are both feeling can help you both to feel supported and understood.

If you're feeling worried or anxious about getting your COVID-19 vaccine, you may find the below tips helpful -

- **Find out where your vaccination will be** - so you know what to expect. It could be at a vaccination centre, a local health centre, a hospital or at your GP surgery.
- **Take someone with you** - You can take a carer with you in to your appointment if you need to.
- **Arrange something to look forward to afterwards** - For example, this could be a nice coffee/meal, a chat with a friend or a film to watch.
- **Use relaxation techniques** - like focusing on your breathing, grounding techniques or distracting yourself with music or a book.
- **Ask what support there is** - Your GP should be able to tell you if there's any flexibility in where you attend your appointment. At the appointment itself, the person giving you the vaccine may be able to use things like numbing cream if you are worried about pain or sensations.
- **The NHS has information about the Covid-19 vaccine** - This includes guidance on who is a priority for vaccination, how to book your appointment and information about the safety of the vaccine.

For further discussion and some more tips please join us for our '**Vaccine Anxiety**' webinar on **Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> July at 12pm**, please use the below link to register for this session –

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/1907382610036594701>

If you are unable to join the webinar live, a recording of the session can be accessed using the same link above after the webinar has taken place.

If you feel you may need some support, you can contact Care first. Care first is a leading provider of confidential, professional counselling, information and advice services. All employees are eligible to use Care first, our services include; telephone counselling, information services and online support. Call Care first on the Freephone number provided by your organisation and you can speak to a professional in confidence.

**Useful information** - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/>