



## COVID-19 Vaccination in People Living with HIV

People living with HIV (PLHIV) appear to be at increased risk for severe outcomes with COVID-19 compared with people without HIV. PLHIV with stable diseases have been included in the COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials but safety and efficacy data specific to PLHIV is yet to be available. Nonetheless, based on the safety profiles to date and the nature of the vaccines (non-live vaccines), there is no reason for additional concern at present. Given the potential benefits of COVID-19 vaccines outweigh the potential risks, it is recommended PLHIV, unless with contraindications, to receive COVID-19 vaccination for personal protection. PLHIV shall always discuss with his/her HIV physicians for advice whenever needed.

### 1. Should PLHIV receive COVID-19 vaccines?

Unless with contraindications, PLHIV, regardless of their CD4 count, are **recommended** to receive COVID-19 vaccination for personal protection from COVID-19 infection as the potential benefits outweigh the potential risks.

It is possible that the level of protection from COVID-19 vaccines may vary among PLHIV. It is advised that infection control practice in the COVID-19 pandemic such as wearing masks, hand hygiene, social distancing shall continue with COVID-19 vaccination at the moment.

### 2. Are COVID-19 vaccines safe for PLHIV?

The COVID-19 vaccines<sup>1</sup> currently provided by the Government's vaccination programme do **not** contain live or attenuated SARS-CoV-2 viruses thus cannot cause COVID-19. There is currently no evidence for more side effects in PLHIV.

PLHIV should take into consideration factors including contraindications, such as allergic history and comorbidities, efficacy, personal choice etc. when opt for

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about the COVID-19 vaccines, please refer to the designated website of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme at <https://www.covidvaccine.gov.hk/en/vaccine>.

vaccination. If PLHIV have other co-existing medical conditions that are not under control, they shall discuss with their doctors first if deferral of vaccination is necessary.

### **3. Will COVID-19 vaccines affect antiretroviral therapy?**

There is no known interaction between antiretroviral therapy and the COVID-19 vaccines so far. Thus antiretroviral therapy should be continued without interruption during the course of vaccination.

**By The Hong Kong Society for Infectious Diseases and Hong Kong Society for HIV Medicine**

**March 2021**

#### References:

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2. US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices' Interim Recommendation for Use of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine — United States, December 2020. Accessed on 16 March 2021. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6950e2.htm>.
3. HIV Medicine Association. COVID-19 Vaccines and People with HIV Frequently Asked Questions. Accessed on 16 March 2021. Available at <https://www.idsociety.org/globalassets/idsa/public-health/covid-19/covid-19-vaccines-hiv-faq.pdf>.
4. British HIV Association. SARS-CoV-2 vaccine advice for adults living with HIV: British HIV Association (BHIVA) & Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) guidance. Accessed on 16 March 2021. Available at <https://www.bhiva.org/SARS-CoV-2-vaccine-advice-for-adults-living-with-HIV-plain-english-version-update>.
5. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). COVID-19 vaccines and HIV. Accessed on 16 March 2021. Available at [https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media\\_asset/covid19-vaccines-and-hiv\\_en.pdf](https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/covid19-vaccines-and-hiv_en.pdf).