

**A SHOT OF HOPE ASK THE EXPERT**

# **Transplant patients to diabetics, doctors advise jab at earliest to avoid Covid risk**

**Can liver transplant recipients take a Covid-19 vaccine?**

**— RAKESH D, HYDERABAD**

Yes, they should at the earliest. Transplant recipients (liver as well as other organs) on regular immunosuppressant medication are at higher risk of both infection from the Covid-19 virus as well as other severe diseases than the general population. They should receive the vaccine shot early. Therefore, they have been given priority status in many countries, including India.

Like other vaccines, Covid vaccines also offer lower levels of protection in transplant recipients in comparison to the general population, where they prevent severe forms of the infection and death. They should be taken early after transplant, once the dose of medication has stabilised — one to six months after transplantation. If 10 years have passed since the transplant surgery, the vaccine should be taken at the earliest opportunity.

A vaccine should be taken even if you were previously infected and have recovered from Covid-19, as it will act as a booster and augment protection. If you presently have Covid, take the vaccine 8 weeks after the symptoms resolve. Remember, the risk of getting infection after vaccination remains and precautions — wearing a mask, social distancing and frequent washing of hands — need to be continued till resolution of the pandemic. Additional booster doses should also be taken (as and when advised by the regulatory authorities) to enhance protection as well as to gain protection from newer variants of the virus, which may be incorporated into the updated vaccine shots.

**Is Covid-19 vaccine safe for my father who is suffering from diabetes mellitus (for 20 years) and hypertension (more than 10 years), and has been recently diagnosed with tuberculosis with sputum positive (scanty 6 and 7)? Recently, he has started taking treatment for TB and is on medication for diabetes, hypertension and enlarged prostate.**

— **SAURABH MANGAL, BEAWAR**

It's safe for all. In fact, people who have an underlying medical condition are more at risk of catching Covid and then developing complications due to the virus. Thus, all the more reason that they should take the vaccine.

**Can I take the first dose of Covaxin within a week of donating plasma?**

— **RIMPLE BHATIA, NEW DELHI**

Medically, there should not be any obvious contraindication and one can take Covid-19 vaccine after two weeks of donating plasma or blood. But you should know that convalescent plasma therapy has very limited therapeutic application. Treating physicians can consult the ICMR advisory in this regard and the result of the trial conducted by ICMR (PLACID Trial, published in BMJ, free to download) is also a good resource material that everybody can draw upon.

**Is it safe to conceive between the two vaccine doses?**

— **VINI GOEL, NEW DELHI**

It is advisable to wait for both shots and then plan pregnancy. You can immediately plan pregnancy after the second shot of Covid vaccine.

**Is it safe for menstruating women to take a Covid vaccine?**

— **SUSHIL PARIANI, MUMBAI**

Yes, it's safe for menstruating women to take a vaccine.

**Which is the preferred antibiotic for Covid patients — doxycycline or azithromycin?**

— **LALITHA, CHENNAI**

The antibiotics — doxycycline and azithromycin — have no significant clinical benefit in Covid-19 patients. These should not be used in the management of confirmed or suspected Covid cases unless they are being used for secondary infections like acute bacterial pneumonia, sinusitis, otitis media, pharyngitis or tonsillitis. Both these antibiotics have potential antiviral and anti-

inflammatory properties but evidence from community randomised trials is lacking.

**What is the risk of infection if one is in the balcony and, say, there is an infected person in the balcony above or below?**

— **ANSHUMAN GHOSH, KOLKATA**

Risk of infection will be minimal if one is in a balcony and an infected person happens to be in the other balcony above or below. The virus causing Covid-19 disease may remain suspended in the air in indoor settings, and pose a risk. Outdoor settings are safer, especially if you maintain a social distance of six feet. The chances of becoming infected with the virus are far slimmer outdoors than indoors.



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