

WDG Public Health assures residents of AstraZeneca vaccine safety

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Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph (WDG) Public Health says the AstraZeneca vaccine is safe, as number of European countries temporarily suspended the COVID-19 vaccine due to concerns of blood clotting.

“Concerns in the European Union that the AstraZeneca vaccine may be connected adverse thromboembolic events (blood clots) in some recipients do not impact the safety or supply of this vaccine in Canada,” said WDG Public Health unit in a press release on Friday (March 12).

WDG Public Health says there are two important pieces of information to reinforce public confidence in the AstraZeneca vaccine in Canada:

1. With any mass vaccination campaign, there is some small risk of adverse reactions which merit further investigation. At this point, incidences of adverse reaction in individuals receiving the AstraZeneca vaccine are extremely low.
2. There are two ‘versions’ of the AstraZeneca vaccine. The AstraZeneca vaccine product that is currently being delivered to Canada comes from the Serum Institute of India under the brand name COVISHIELD. This is a different supply from the vaccine that is being used in Europe, and the lots that are being investigated are not being used in Ontario.

“The AstraZeneca vaccine available in Canada is both safe and effective,” said Dr. Nicola Mercer, Medical Officer of Health and CEO of WDG Public Health. “I encourage every resident of the region to get vaccinated as soon as it is their turn with whichever approved vaccine is available to them.”

Health Canada is also continuing to support the AstraZeneca vaccine and says the benefits of the vaccine continue to outweigh the risks.

“Health Canada authorized the vaccine based on a thorough, independent review of the evidence and determined that it meets Canada's stringent safety, efficacy, and quality requirements. At this time, there is no indication that the vaccine caused these events. To date, no adverse events relation to the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, or the version manufactured by the Serum Institute of India, have been reported to Health Canada or the Public Health Agency of Canada.”

A statement from Thrombosis Canada included in the press release said,

“Thrombosis is a common medical problem, especially in older people. It is therefore likely that some people who receive a vaccine will, at some point, in the future develop a blood clot for reason that are not related to the vaccine. It is the view of Thrombosis Canada that, based on the available evidence, there is no link between receiving this vaccine and the development of blood clots. In general, vaccine of any type are not associated with the development of blood clots.”

A number of countries in the European Union has suspended the AstraZeneca vaccine as the European Medicines Agency (EMA) conducts and investigation. According to the EMA, as of March 9, 22 cases of thromboembolic events have been reported among 3 million people vaccinated with the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.