



Written by [James Murphy](#) on April 15, 2021

Denmark Halts Use of AstraZeneca Vaccine Over Blood-clot Fears

The Danish Health Authority announced early Wednesday, April 14, that it will discontinue the use of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine over a “known risk of severe side effects” associated with the drug. The move comes despite the European Medicines Agency (EMA), the European Union bureaucracy that oversees medicines for the bloc of nations, giving its [tentative blessing](#) to the vaccine in March.

The AstraZeneca vaccine has been tangentially linked to cases of a rare but serious blood-clotting condition.



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Denmark is the first nation to announce a complete [ban](#) on the AstraZeneca vaccine, which was developed in concert with the University of Oxford in the U.K. After the EMA said that the benefits of the vaccine far outweighed the risks, most countries began distributing the AstraZeneca vaccine again.

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[Several nations](#), including Denmark, stopped administering the AstraZeneca vaccine in March because of reports of serious cases of blood clotting in some individuals, with at least three deaths reported — one in Denmark. Going forward, Denmark will utilize the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna offerings. The 150,000 Danes who received the first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine will get their second doses with other vaccines, though not only are all the vaccines experimental but mixing and matching vaccines is even more experimental.

In a statement, the Danish Health Authority concluded that it will “continue the vaccination against Covid-19 without the vaccine from AstraZeneca.”

Soren Brostrom, head of the Danish Health Authority, said the “difficult decision” was made based on the country currently having the virus under relative control and because other vaccines are available. “The upcoming target groups for vaccination are less likely to become severely ill from Covid,” Brostrom said. “We must weigh this against the fact that we now have a known risk of severe adverse effects from vaccination with AstraZeneca, even if the risk in absolute terms is slight.”

Most of Denmark’s nearly 900,000 vaccination recipients (77 percent) were given the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, with 7.8 percent receiving the Moderna vaccine. The AstraZeneca vaccine was administered to 15.3 percent of Danes who received the jab.

The United States, as well as Switzerland, never approved the AstraZeneca vaccine. In late March, in the United States, AstraZeneca touted that its trials showed a 79 percent efficacy rate, but then the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases claimed that the company may have submitted [outdated information](#) for the trial data.

Denmark’s denouncement of the AstraZeneca vaccine comes at a time when the Johnson and Johnson



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vaccine, a single dose vaccine which was developed by Janssen Vaccines in the Netherlands, is facing similar questions about blood clots. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has recommended a pause in the use of the vaccine, and Johnson and Johnson has halted shipments to Europe as a result.

When asked if the AstraZeneca vaccine is safe, Dr. Martin Michaelis, a professor of Molecular Medicine at Kent University said, "This depends on what you mean by safe. If you mean there cannot be any risk associated with a drug or vaccine, this is an unrealistic expectation."

"Generally, the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is very safe. It has been tested in tens of thousands of individuals in clinical trials and given to millions of patients," Michaelis said. "Hence, the question is whether the benefit of a treatment outweighs the risks or not."

In Denmark, at least, the answer would appear to be "no," even though the nation's vaccination program might be set back several weeks as a result of the ban. Denmark was one of the first nations to discontinue the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine initially. Now the question that remains is whether more nations will follow in giving up on this particular, potentially dangerous vaccine.



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