



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

Ireland Suspends AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine Over Reports of Blood Clots

On Sunday, Ireland suspended use of the AstraZeneca vaccine for COVID-19. Health officials cited reports of serious blood-clotting after the vaccine was used in Norway.

While the World Health Organization said earlier in the week that there was no correlation between receiving the shot and an increased risk of clotting, Iceland, Denmark, and Norway have all taken similar actions regarding the vaccine. Also, Thailand and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have delayed their initial rollout of the vaccine.



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Ireland's minister for health said the suspension was temporary, calling it a "precautionary step."

The decision came after an [advisory](#) from the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH) noted several cases of younger vaccine recipients not feeling well and displaying bleeding under the skin, characterized by "tiny dots and/or large blue patches."

"Common to these patients is that they have had a reduced number of blood platelets," said the statement from the NIPH. "Blood clots and subsequent brain hemorrhages are a rare condition."

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Norwegian health officials reported cases of severe blood clotting after patients received the AstraZeneca vaccine. One death has been reported from a brain hemorrhage, but it is yet to be determined that the vaccine is related to any of the incidents.

"The NIPH has put the AstraZeneca vaccine on hold in the coronavirus immunization program. Now it is the Norwegian Medicines Agency's role to follow up on these suspected side-effects and take the necessary measures in this serious situation," said Geir Bukholm, the Director of the Division of Infection Control and Environmental Health for the NIPH.

AstraZeneca leapt to the defense of its vaccine in a [statement](#) on Sunday, saying that the number of cases of blood clots after the immunization is actually lower than would be expected among the general population.

"Around 17 million people in the E.U. and U.K. have now received our vaccine, and the number of cases of blood clots reported in this group is lower than the hundreds of cases that would be expected among the general population," said AstraZeneca's Chief Medical Officer Ann Taylor. "The nature of this pandemic has led to increased attention in individual cases and we are going beyond the standard practices for safety monitoring of licensed medicines in reporting vaccine events, to ensure public safety."



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Irish officials are stressing that the suspension is temporary and will be lifted as soon as they confirm the blood-clotting is not linked to the vaccine.

“We will continue to monitor the situation, and if we can be satisfied that these events are coincidental and not caused by this vaccine, we will reassess the situation,” said Professor Karina Butler of Ireland’s immunization advisory committee.

According to Butler, it will likely be the end of this week before any conclusion is reached on any link between the vaccine and the blood-clotting issues. Butler also mentioned that the number of clotting incidents was “really no greater” than would be expected in the normal population.

Thus far, no cases of such blood-clotting have been reported in Ireland with more than 117,000 doses of the vaccine already administered in the country. Similar cases have, however, been reported in other European countries.

According to Irish health officials, it is only out of abundance of caution that the vaccine has been suspended. If no serious relation can be found between the vaccine and the blood-clotting reports, vaccinations with the AstraZeneca vaccine could resume as early as next week. Currently, roughly 30,000 vaccination appointments will have to be rescheduled.

The AstraZeneca vaccine was previously steeped in controversy because cells from [aborted fetuses](#) were used in the development of the vaccine.

The AstraZeneca vaccine reportedly does not contain cells from aborted fetuses, although they did use kidney cell lines from a previously aborted fetus to help the vaccine replicate. Those cells are, reportedly, removed before the vaccine is completed.



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