

# Memo

## Reduction of 30-minute observation time for Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine: COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group (CV TAG) recommendation

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**Date:** 8 March 2021

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**To:** Jo Gibbs, Director of National Operations, COVID Vaccine Immunisation Programme

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**Cc:** Juliet Rumball-Smith, Chief Clinical Advisor, COVID-19 Immunisation, Testing and Supply

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**From:** Dr Ian Town, Chief Science Advisor  
Dr Caroline McElnay, Director of Public Health

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**For your:** Information

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### Purpose of report

1. To outline the COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group's recommendation following a request to reconsider the current requirement for individuals to be observed for 30 minutes after receiving the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.

### Context

2. At the CV TAG meeting held on Thursday 4 February 2021, CV TAG decided that individuals must wait for 30 minutes after receiving the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccination. The rates of severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis after administration of the Pfizer vaccine informed CV TAG's decision to implement a 30-minute observation period.
3. This decision was taken as a precautionary measure with an intention to review the requirement following initial experience.
4. Data published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) since CV TAG last met identifies a reporting rate of anaphylaxis of 4.7 cases/million doses administered with a median time of 10 minutes for symptoms/signs of anaphylaxis to manifest.
5. Based on this data, the COVID Vaccine Immunisation programme (CVIP) asked CV TAG to review the 30-minute observation period requirement to align with standard post-vaccination observation periods, which will enable greater on-site efficiencies, remove a barrier to vaccination uptake, and better align with international practices.

### Recommendations

6. CV TAG members considered the request from the CVIP to review the 30-minute observation period requirement post vaccination. Discussion at the meeting held on Tuesday 2 March 2021 identified three options for consideration:
  - a) Continue to require a 30-minute observation period OR

- b) Reduce the observation period to 20 minutes for people with no history of immediate allergic reaction or anaphylaxis, and utilise a 30 minute observation period for those at higher risk of this event (i.e. who have a history of hypersensitivity to vaccines or any injectable therapy, or of anaphylaxis due to any cause, including those who have a prescribed adrenalin autoinjector);\* OR
  - c) **Reduce the observation period to 20 minutes as a standard practice, with vaccinators encouraged to be flexible around the need for a longer period in some circumstances (e.g. if the person lives in a rural/remote area). \***
7. **The CV TAG recommended that option (c) should be implemented.**

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Dr Ian Town

**Chief Science Advisor and**

**Chair of the COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group**

\*This advice would not apply to those who experienced anaphylaxis following the first dose of the Pfizer vaccine - who should not be given a second dose - and those with known hypersensitivity to any of the vaccine excipients for whom the vaccine is contraindicated.