

FAQs about Islam and vaccination against COVID-19

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In collaboration with



DANISH HEALTH
AUTHORITY

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Foreword by Søren Brostrøm

"Health for all" – this is our motto at the Danish Health Authority.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the entire world. No population has walked free. It has meant illness and death in all countries, and has had major consequences for the lives we normally live.

COVID-19 is caused by a new virus that infects humans. This means that we did not have immunity when the pandemic hit, so COVID-19 spread very quickly. This is also the case in Denmark. That is why vaccinations are so important – so that we can control the pandemic, rather than it controlling us.

Anyone can become infected with COVID-19. Anyone can become ill from COVID-19, but some are at a particularly higher risk of becoming severely ill and dying if they become infected with the disease. Vaccinations are the most effective way of preventing infectious diseases that we know.

In Denmark, we have chosen to offer free COVID-19 vaccinations to everyone aged 16 years and older. Vaccination is voluntary. Here at the Danish Health Authority, we recommend that as many people as possible become vaccinated against COVID-19, and that you have the vaccine as soon as you are offered it. Because the more people who become vaccinated, the better we will be able to control the pandemic. And fewer will become ill and die from the disease.

Throughout the pandemic, we at the Danish Health Authority have answered thousands of questions about COVID-19 and vaccines. In all parts of Danish society, there is great interest in vaccines, but also some concerns about getting the injection. Here at the Danish Health Authority, we want everyone in Denmark to get the information they need in order to be able to make their own decision about whether they want to be vaccinated.

This pamphlet provides answers to some of the most frequent health-related questions about vaccination against COVID-19, while also providing answers to some of the specific questions that Danish Muslims may have in relation to the vaccines.

I would like to thank the Danish Muslim organisations that have contributed to this pamphlet.



Søren Brostrøm

Chief Executive Officer
Danish Health Authority

Foreword by Naveed Baig

It has been a hard year with the pandemic, which has turned many people's lives upside down in different ways. We have been forced to interact with each other in a completely different and radical way than before. *"We are each other's destiny,"* as Løgstrup states, and *"a human being is a self which has been established by another, and the deepest need in man is the need for social intercourse,"* according to Kierkegaard. Man is thus, in essence, deeply dependent on his surroundings and fellow human beings. The coronavirus pandemic has shown this very clearly. If we do not take care of each other, it can have serious consequences for ourselves, our fellow citizens and society in general.

Vaccination against COVID-19 is an effective weapon in the fight against the pandemic, but it may give rise to some considerations, also of a religious nature. Therefore, the organisations of the Danish Islamic Centre, Diyanet (the Danish-Turkish Islamic Foundation), the Islamic Union of Denmark, the Danish Moroccan Forum, the Joint Council of Muslims, the Danish Muslim Union and Minhaj-ul-Quran Denmark, collaborating with the Danish Health Authority, have tried to answer some of the most frequently asked questions asked by Danish Muslims about the vaccines against COVID-19. The answers are based on the latest health scientific knowledge, but the situation changes quickly, and new knowledge may emerge.

The Muslim organisations which support this document have full respect for the many possible interpretations of Islamic teachings and understand that the interpretations that emerge here are not shared by everyone. Therefore, the individual persons are invited to a dialogue with their own spiritual mentors and health professionals.

In these times, it is important for everyone to be aware of misinformation. We need credible knowledge to fight COVID-19, and we continuously receive much information, not least about the vaccines against COVID-19. But not all the stories are true, and some may be directly misleading. Listen to information from the Danish health authorities, municipalities and members of civil society.

In Denmark, vaccination against COVID-19 is free of charge. Everyone is offered vaccination, and it is completely voluntary whether you want to get vaccinated. The vaccines are not currently offered to pregnant or breastfeeding women, or children under 16, as they are not yet approved for these groups.

This document is primarily intended for Danish Muslims, but it is also addressed to others who want more knowledge about the vaccines, their contents and side effects. In the UK, organisations such as Faith Associates¹ and the British Islamic Medical Association² have been at the forefront of providing information about COVID-19 and vaccines related to ethical and religious issues. This document is inspired by their work.

The Islamic references in the document, which are of a religious nature, come from recognised Islamic councils in the UK that work with religious and ethical issues. As we do not have such councils in Denmark, reference is made to the UK organisations. The words 'Allah' and 'God' are used synonymously in this document.

A big thank you is extended to the Danish-Muslim organisations and to the Danish Health Authority for their support and important comments on this letter.

Naveed Baig

Danish Islamic Centre (DIC)



New vaccines are approved for use in Denmark on an ongoing basis. Specific details about the individual vaccines in this pamphlet is based on the vaccines approved for use and part of the vaccination programme in Denmark as of 5 May 2021.

¹ www.faihtassociates.co.uk

² www.britishima.org

Answers to questions about health

The Danish Health Authority has listed answers to some of the health-related questions about the vaccine here.

Are the vaccines safe?

COVID-19 vaccines are approved according to the same standards that apply to all medicines in the EU regarding quality, efficacy and safety. This means that requirements for documentation are not relaxed, even though there is a great desire and need to have vaccines against COVID-19 made available quickly. The safety of the COVID-19 vaccines is closely monitored by the authorities, also after they have been taken into use.

The Danish Health Authority is responsible for making decisions on approving vaccines against COVID-19, and how they are included in a vaccination programme rolled out in Denmark. The Danish Health Authority also has the day-to-day responsibility for the Danish childhood immunisation programme and the annual flu vaccination, among other programmes.

The Danish Health Authority regards the vaccines against COVID-19 as well documented. The approved vaccines have been studied in large trials with up to 40,000 participants. This is up to eight times more than are normally included in vaccine trials. Only a few serious adverse drug reactions were recorded during the trials.

The authorities continuously monitor possible side effects. This means that they can react quickly and examine the matter if concerns arise about a vaccine.

Side effects

All vaccines cause side effects, including the vaccines against COVID-19. They generally cause mild and moderate discomfort which gets better or disappears after a few days. The most common side effects include:

- Pain and swelling where you were given the jab
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle and joint pain
- Chills
- Light fever

Allergic reactions may occur in rare cases. If you know that you have previously had an allergic reaction to a medicine, you need to tell the person who vaccinates you before getting the injection.

Most side effects caused by a vaccine occur within the first six weeks. The authorities continuously monitor whether there are long-term side effects which have not been seen in the trials. And then you can decide how to handle this. The risk of side effects must always be weighed against the disease that the vaccine prevents.

Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccines?

You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccines. None of the vaccines against COVID-19 approved for use in the EU contain either active or inactive SARS-CoV-2 virus. If you experience symptoms that are similar to COVID-19 after the vaccination, this is a sign that the immune system is working.

Do the vaccines affect fertility?

The vaccines against COVID-19 are not approved for pregnant women. The reason is that the vaccines have not been tested on pregnant women.

However, this does not mean that you should be nervous that the vaccines affect fertility, i.e. your ability to get pregnant. You may very well get vaccinated even if you are trying to become pregnant/make your partner pregnant. The vaccination does not affect the ability to have children – either for men or women.

Will the vaccines change my DNA?

The vaccines do not change the DNA of the body.

Comirnaty® from Pfizer/BioNTech and COVID-19 vaccine Moderna® are so-called mRNA vaccines. RNA is a substance that is quickly broken down in the body after it has acted. The mRNA vaccines do not contain virus.

Do the vaccines contain fetal cells or are they produced in fetal cells?

Neither Comirnaty® from Pfizer/BioNTech nor COVID-19 Vaccine Moderna® include cells from a fetus (foetal cells) or are produced in foetal cells.

- When new vaccines are entered in the vaccination programme, you can read about their contents on the Danish Medicines Agency's website **www.lmst.dk**. You can find information on the website about whether the vaccines contain traces of alcohol or pig by-products.
- You can also visit **coronadenmark.dk**, where information is available in a number of languages.

Where can you find answers to your questions?

You can always find the latest information at **sst.dk/en**

Answers to religious questions

The organisations behind this pamphlet have provided answers to some of the religion-related questions Danish Muslims may have about vaccinations. The Danish Health Authority has contributed professional knowledge in the answers.

Is it okay to take a vaccine that can make me briefly ill?

No one knows how ill they will get from COVID-19. The elderly and the vulnerable can become very ill, and may, in the worst-case scenario, die from COVID-19. Younger, healthy persons can also get very ill, although this rarely happens. Some also continue to suffer long-term effects of COVID-19 such as shortness of breath, fatigue and headache as well as loss of sense of taste and smell for up to six months.

It is also a consideration that we as a society gain control over the pandemic by all of us being vaccinated. This way, we take good care of each other, of people who are at a higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19, and we will be able to have an open society without restrictions again.

Although the vaccines against COVID-19 may cause side effects (as described in the first section), it has been documented that the vaccines approved for use in Denmark are effective against COVID-19 and can prevent severe illness, hospitalisations and deaths. Based on things such as the established principle in Islam to *“accept the lesser harm in order to ward off a greater harm”*, Muslims can accept the vaccines.³

Are the vaccines halal?

Animals

None of the vaccines approved for use in Denmark as of 5 May 2021 contain gelatine or traces of animals including pigs and chimpanzees.⁵

Alcohol (ethanol)

Neither Comirnaty® from Pfizer/BioNTech nor the COVID-19 Vaccine Moderna® contain alcohol (ethanol).

There is consensus among Muslim scholars that medicines, and thus vaccinations, are permitted to be taken in order to avoid disease. Therefore it will be perfectly legitimate to get the types of vaccination against COVID-19 that are on the market right now – regardless of which one.⁵

³ www.bbsi.org.uk/top-ten-questions-imams-scholars-get-asked-about-vaccines/

⁴ British Islamic Medical Association, www.britishima.org/operation-vaccination/hub/covidmyths/

⁵ www.minab.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Minab-Khutbah.pdf

Do I have a responsibility to others to take the vaccine?

The more people who are vaccinated, the better control we will have over the epidemic. This way, we take good care of each other and of people who are at a higher risk of becoming severely ill from COVID-19. Therefore, the Danish Health Authority recommends everyone to get vaccinated. In Denmark, there are already vaccination programmes for infants, children and young people as well as people with various diseases etc. and many use these programmes. It is important that we do the same with COVID-19.

To have trust (tawakkul) in Allah is a virtue and should not be confused with blind trust. Helplessness and passiveness are not tawakkul, and taking care of your own health and well-being is something that Muslims have an obligation to do. Trust in God and active self-help go hand in hand, and are not in opposition to each other. The Prophet Muhammad received and recommended medical treatment, saying "*tadawu*" (seek treatment).⁶

For the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, it is already mandatory to have been vaccinated against various diseases, and the vaccination against COVID-19 has also recently become a requirement from the Saudi health authorities.⁷ Additionally, it may become a general requirement for world travel. The reason for this is that countries may demand a vaccine passports or the like to allow you to enter the country. Being vaccinated against COVID-19 can therefore make it easier to go on holiday, visit family etc.

Can I get vaccinated during Ramadan?

There is concern among some Muslims that the vaccine will break the Ramadan fast, which is understandable. However, you can get vaccinated while you are fasting, as the vaccines have no nutritional content. Nor is this the purpose of the vaccines. The vaccine is given through the muscle of the arm and not through the mouth. Muslim scholars agree that the existing COVID-19 vaccines do not break the Ramadan fast.⁸

The few droplets of blood that may be triggered by a vaccination jab will not break the Ramadan fast either. COVID-19 tests (via the nose or the mouth) during Ramadan will also not break the fast, as no substance enters the body.⁹

⁶ Yacoub Ahmed, The Fiqh of Medicine, TaHa, 2001

⁷ www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/3/saudi-arabia-says-covid-19-vaccination-required-for-hajj-2021

⁸ www.britishima.org/operation-vaccination/hub/statements/#FAST

⁹ www.gulfnews.com/uae/taking-covid-19-vaccine-does-not-break-ramadan-fast-says-grand-mufti-in-dubai-1.77668374

Maintain the good habits

Even though you are vaccinated, there is still a risk that you may infect others. Follow the Danish Health Authority's recommendations to limit the spread of infection in public spaces:



Keep your distance.
Avoid handshakes,
hugs and kisses on
the cheek



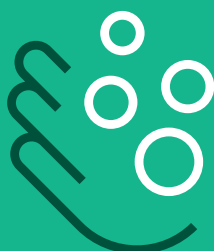
Stay at home and
get tested if you
experience symptoms



Open windows and
doors and ventilate your
home regularly. Avoid
being too many people
together indoors



Cough and sneeze
into your sleeve



Wash your hands often
or use hand sanitiser



Clean thoroughly and
regularly, especially
surfaces that are
touched by many
people