IBE International Bureau for Epilepsy

ILAE International League Against Epilepsy

IBE and ILAE Joint Statement on COVID-19 vaccines and people with epilepsy

Vaccines against COVID19 are currently being approved and becoming available.

There is currently no evidence to suggest that having epilepsy is specifically associated with a higher risk of side effects from a COVID-19 vaccine. For people with epilepsy, the risk of COVID-19 infection and potential complications far outweighs the risk of side effects from a COVID-19 vaccine. As with other vaccines however, a fever can develop after a COVID-19 vaccination. This could lower the seizure threshold in some people. Antipyretics (e.g. paracetamol/acetaminophen) taken regularly for 48 hours after the vaccination (or for the duration of fever) will minimize this risk.

Before you receive a COVID-19 vaccine, make sure to let your vaccination provider know that you have epilepsy, as well as any other important medical information, such as:

• Allergies, especially an allergy to any ingredient in the vaccine

• Allergic reactions to prior vaccines (e.g. flu vaccine)

• Current or recent fever or infection

• All medications you are taking, especially medications that suppress the immune system (e.g. immunomodulatory or immunosuppressive medicines) or anticoagulants.

• If you are pregnant or nursing, or plan to become pregnant

As with any vaccine, you should not receive the COVID-19 vaccine if you are allergic to any of its ingredients. You should not receive a second dose if you had an allergic reaction to the first dose.

If you already received the COVID-19 vaccine, it is important to continue wearing a mask and social distance. The current vaccines reduce your risk of getting sick from COVID-19 by up to 90%, depending on the vaccine, but vaccinated people may still be able to spread COVID-19 to others without knowing they are carrying it.

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COVID-19