

COVID-19 misunderstandings cleared up

MISUNDERSTANDING 1: "THE VACCINE CAN GIVE ME BLOOD CLOTS"

The vaccine that can very, very rarely cause blood clots is the Astra Zeneca vaccine, but you won't get that vaccine.

Aboriginal people in the Territory are all getting the Pfizer vaccine. More than two million people in Australia have had the Pfizer and none of them developed blood clots.

The Aboriginal community in Central Australia is the first place in the country where everyone over the age of 16 can get Pfizer. We are really privileged. We've got this chance now and we've got to grab it with both hands.

MISUNDERSTANDING 2: "THE VACCINES WON'T PROTECT ME AGAINST NEW VARIANTS OF THE VIRUS"

Yes they do. Despite all the variants, the vaccine protects you against severe disease and death.

Some vaccines are not protecting as well against getting infected with a new variant. Still, if you get infected you will only get a cold, but you are much less likely to need to go to hospital and extremely unlikely to die.

One in every 20 un-vaccinated people infected with COVID are likely to die and many more will be hospitalised and suffer long term illnesses.

The first dose of the Pfizer prevents 95 out of 100 people being hospitalised from COVID and the second dose 96 out of 100.

The first dose of the Pfizer gives you 34 per cent protection against the Indian Delta variant. With your second dose protection goes up to 89 per cent.

It won't completely stop vaccinated people from spreading the virus, but it's very good at it.

It's more reason why everyone needs to be vaccinated, because even if everyone in the world is vaccinated this virus will still be spreading and if you are unvaccinated you're a sitting duck!

Particularly in a country where most other people are vaccinated. If you're also overweight and unwell that's not a risk worth taking. You're rolling the dice.

MISUNDERSTANDING 3: "I HAVE TIME TO WAIT FOR AN OUTBREAK BEFORE I GET VACCINATED"

No you don't. You need two doses of the Pfizer vaccine to be fully protected. It takes four to five weeks for the two doses to work, so you need to start your first dose well before an outbreak. It is possible that the time between doses will be extended, and then it will take even longer for full protection.

There will not be enough vaccine to do everyone at once if there is an outbreak. If we had an outbreak and everyone expects to get it – it's not going to happen. There are logistical issues and there could be other outbreaks elsewhere. You can't assume that if there is an outbreak we'll have enough vaccine to do everyone in the space of a week or two. It needs to be done over time.

If you leave it too late, and there is an outbreak, it's highly likely that not everyone who wants to be vaccinated will be able to get it.

The health department doesn't have enough health workers to do mass vaccinations. They have fewer nurses now than they had before COVID and had to close four remote clinics for the first time, in the middle of winter! That's a really serious problem when there is an outbreak.

Also, lining up for the vaccine in the middle of an outbreak is dangerous, because as we've seen in Melbourne, one of those COVID-positive primary contacts was in one of those queues and could have easily exposed others to the virus.

MISUNDERSTANDING 4: "THE VIRUS IS ONLY A DANGER TO OLD PEOPLE"

That's not correct.

It's true that those most likely to get sick and die from COVID are old people, but it is very dangerous for many young people.

Overweight people, those with diabetes and kidney disease are also at great risk.

Between two and three of every 100 children under 10 with COVID end up in hospital. It may not kill them but that number alone is going to overwhelm the hospital if there is an outbreak.

Around 40 out of 100 young people with COVID have still got symptoms after two months.

We also don't yet know what the long-term effects of COVID are. We don't know yet how sick it is going to make people in 10, 20 years' time.

MISUNDERSTANDING 5: "THE VACCINE CAN CAUSE LONG-TERM HEALTH PROBLEMS"

It's almost certain that the vaccines do not cause any long-term health problems.

It's true there is some uncertainty, but there is no uncertainty about what can happen if you get COVID.

There is no way the vaccines are going to cause long-term problems by changing the building blocks of your body, your genes.

Your body can't put the genetic material in the vaccines into your own genetic material in the cells of your body. It's scientifically impossible because there is no known way this could happen.

MISUNDERSTANDING 6: "LOCKDOWNS AND CONTACT TRACING WILL PROTECT US"

An outbreak here would spread more quickly than in Melbourne. There people were using QR codes, social distancing and got used to wearing masks. Here we've got none of that. Our contact tracing is also not what it is in the big states.

Going to a lockdown quickly may not protect us either. When we had the biosecurity lockdown last year some people laughed at it. They came and went as if there were no roadblocks.

What protected us was not the lockdown, but that we had no community transmission.

When we get community transmission and many of us are not vaccinated we'll be in big trouble if the lockdown ends up not working.

MISUNDERSTANDING 7: "BORDER CLOSURES WILL PROTECT US"

We can't rely on border closures and quarantine to protect us much longer.

When the rest of the country is vaccinated, and this place is not, the rest of the country is not going to wait.

They will open all the borders. They'll say we had our chance to be vaccinated.

The opportunity to get vaccinated and protect ourselves from this virus is now.

MISUNDERSTANDING 8: "OUR HOSPITALS CAN HANDLE AN OUTBREAK"

The Alice Springs Hospital is likely to become overwhelmed very quickly if many people are still unvaccinated when an outbreak happens.

When there are more sick people than there are beds, respirators and oxygen tanks, health workers will decide who gets them. They will decide who gets to live or die.

It is also likely that we won't have enough health workers to look after all the sick during an outbreak because there is already a shortage of health workers.

We also don't know how many of them are vaccinated against the virus, so they could get sick and the hospital won't be at full capacity at the very time it will need to be at double capacity.

If you haven't had the vaccine when the virus comes here, what you have seen on TV about outbreaks in India, Brazil and England – all those hospitals overwhelmed, people dying in the streets, people lying on the floors of hospitals, dying from COVID – could happen here.

That's what this vaccine can stop. This is now up to you. It's your decision.

WE'RE READY FOR COVID-19 ARE YOU?



"We need to keep the virus from infecting people, and getting vaccinated is how we do this. We wanna go in a good direction and listen to the rules about how to keep us safe."



"We must get vaccinated because it is the greatest protection we can give to our elders and loved ones. COVID is a killer, the vaccine is a lifesaver."



"I've seen traditional owners in Tennant Creek get the jab, and the news of the positive COVID-19 cases in the NT helped me make up my mind to also get vaccinated."



"I want to be safe because of my age and health, I wanted to get it and will see how I go. I feel fine now."



"Getting vaccinated is important to protect myself, my family and the elders - especially in remote communities."



"I got the first shot and waited for a while and got the second one. I'm right. I'm still here! It's palya! I love it because I can work with the visitors."

"Don't shy away from getting vaccinated! It is coming and if it gets inside you it will really knock you out. Please family! Get vaccinated to stay strong and healthy."



"COVID-19 is a very scary and dangerous virus, and although we have been lucky so far, it is only a matter of time before it spreads to Central Australia."



"If you don't have the vaccine then when that virus comes here, what I've seen on TV about what's happening in India, Brazil and England - all those hospitals overwhelmed, people dying in the streets, people lying on the floors of hospitals, dying from COVID. That's what this vaccine can stop. This is now up to you. It's your decision."