Webinar: Demystifying Covid Vaccines
The Lancet Infectious Diseases

Here’s how you can help friends and family understand the benefits of vaccination.

**Q** Let’s think about safety in the context of what we’re trying to achieve with COVID vaccines.

In some areas, the dangers are no less than 1 in 1000 deaths. While we don’t want to frighten people, the numbers of deaths and disabilities from COVID are frightening and much higher than the risk of the vaccine. Some people get the flu each year and are more likely to die from it.

**A** What are the main barriers to uptake?

The biggest barriers are lack of information and uncertainty. When people already think vaccines are risky, fear is an obstacle. People don’t want to be part of the first group of ‘guinea pigs’. We are working across the UK to ensure that people feel they can trust our information.

**Q** How could we have tested properly?

Vaccine development involves multiple stages, from initial lab work, to testing in animals, at least three stages of human trials, and approval by regulators. There are usually considerable gaps between these stages. Human trials may involve a few thousand people, while millions of people will receive the final vaccine. It’s not possible to repeat these stages in all people. Instead, measures like randomisation and controls are used to ensure the results are reliable.

**A** Are these vaccines safe?

No vaccine is 100% effective, but the current vaccines will likely prevent the severest form of the disease.

The vaccines have been tested on millions of people, and only those that are safe and effective will be approved. Crucially, no steps were missed, and the duration of clinical trials was still being tested, so the vaccines were ready to roll out as soon as they were approved. Similarly, manufacturers invested in production facilities while vaccines were being tested.

Rapid development does not mean that steps to assess safety were skipped.

**Q** Why do I need a vaccine if I’ve already had the virus?

If you have had COVID-19 and recovered, you might be immune. But how long you are protected from getting it again is uncertain. Protecting your family, friends and colleagues without actually having to encounter the virus is a way of providing us with immunity — and protecting our healthcare system.

**A** Why can’t people decide for themselves?

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**Q** Why do I need a vaccine if I’ve had COVID-19?

Don’t I already have antibodies?

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