

COVID-19 AND DEMENTIA: Tips for COVID19 Vaccinators

The below advice should be read in conjunction with official HSE COVID-19 vaccination information and guidance on <https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/hcpinfo/covid19vaccineinfo4hps/>

Receiving the COVID-19 vaccination may be **distressing and overwhelming** for some people with dementia. Some people may have impaired communication and may not be able to express how they are feeling. It is important to take a personalised approach as every person with dementia is different. Taking simple steps can reduce anxiety and agitation, which may be a barrier to someone receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

- Allow additional time when giving the vaccine to someone with dementia.
- Explain the procedure before you begin, using simple language and short sentences.
- Ensure all practicable steps are taken to enable understanding of the procedure and what it entails.
- Use visual, easy to read information sheets, as appropriate.
- Ensure there is adequate (dementia inclusive) directional signage at the vaccination centre to help the person through the process.

Allow a support person to be present at the time of vaccination.

Face masks are now normal but some people may not be as familiar with full PPE and this may be confusing or frightening. It is more difficult for people to pick-up facial and body cues to aid communication.

Adopt dementia inclusive communication approaches:

- Get the person's attention by touching their arm.
- Put the person at their ease.
- Make eye contact.
- Use a reassuring, positive tone of voice.
- Introduce yourself by name.
- Ensure you have a name badge or if possible have a photo of yourself.
- Use the person's name.
- Use simple and clear language such as *injection*, *needle*, *sting*, *quick*, to aid understanding.
- If possible establish clear YES-NO signals e.g. thumbs up for yes etc.
- Use other gestures as appropriate; show the person the needle, point to their arm.

Person living with dementia is invited for COVID-19 vaccination

Allow additional time for the vaccination procedure

Take all possible steps to ensure the vaccination procedure is understood:

1. Use simple clear language to explain the procedure.
2. Minimise noise or distractions.
3. Use short, simple sentences.
4. Ensure there is adequate seating.
5. Ensure there is appropriate signage to direct people.
6. Repeat words if required.
7. Illustrations can help – easy read/visual info.

Person gives consent to proceed?

YES

Ensure that the person can sit calmly and that their support person is present for the duration. Explain that they have to wait following the procedure.

NO

(or the person becomes distressed during procedure/vaccination)

Vaccination cannot proceed; the person has the right to refuse

Note: In some cases, where clinical presentation suggests a diagnosis of COVID-19, or it is not possible to gain consent, or the person is becoming very distressed, the medical officer may decide not to continue with the vaccination procedure.