Vaccine after effects more common in those who already had COVID

Tim Spector

The ZOE Science and Medicine Editorial Team

According to the latest data from the ZOE COVID Symptom Study people who have had a previous COVID-19 infection are almost twice as likely to experience one or more mild vaccine body (systemic) side effects. Previous research has shown that people who have had a COVID infection/illness vaccine dose. The study also found that the 2nd dose of the vaccine is more likely to cause side effects than the first dose (1.8 and 0.8 times the risk). Most mild side effects (such as headache, fatigue, muscle pain, chills, fever) last a few days and are more common in younger people (under 55) and people who have had a previous COVID infection.

COVID-19 vaccines work by using a harmless version or component of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus to trick the body into thinking it has an infection, and the virus is encountered the body is able to fight it off. This 'training' exercise leads to the production of antibodies and T cells, which can fight the real infection, including coronavirus, if we get it in future. Common (frequent) reports in post-jabs identified fever and being tired (fatigue). If stronger reactions they indicate a better immune response to the vaccine.

Summary of findings

- A third (33%) of people who had previously had COVID-19 reported at least one whole body (systemic) side effect after 1 dose compared to 21% of those who had not had COVID-19 before.
- 4% of people experienced a severe side effect (such as pain in swelling near the site of the injection other than arm) and 45% after the second dose.
- 11% of people reported a mild whole body (systemic) side effect after only the 1 dose from the first dose compared to 25% that the second dose (the 2 doses of the vaccine are given at least 3 weeks apart from each other).
- 5% of vaccinated men and 9% of vaccinated women reported at least one whole body (systemic) side effect after the second dose.
- Under the more likely to experience side effects after the 2nd dose: Women (14.5% vs 4%)
- Under 55 people have more frequent side effects than over 55 people (21% vs 8%)

The data comes from a sub-analysis of almost 40,000 vaccine doses, of which people who had received two vaccine doses 20,000 weeks in the app. Previous research has shown that people who have had a COVID infection are one of the biggest vaccine beneficiaries because the first jab/dose where they only have one dose of the vaccine, the immune response is similar to people who do not have COVID infection, but after the second dose they are much more likely to have side effects (reactogenic) after receiving the vaccine. This current data is consistent with previous research and data from other countries and healthcare workers.

The ZOE app also asked over one million contributors whether a lot they were to receive a vaccine and if not, why. Which almost 90% said yes and 2% said they had already had the vaccine, and 1% said they had a medical reason to not receive a vaccine. The main reasons given for hesitant continuation were, long term side effects (30.2%), lack of knowledge (27.5%), and concerns about potential side effects (19.4%).

> Tim Spector OBE, lead scientist on the ZOE COVID Symptom Study app and Professor of Genetic Epidemiology at King's College London, comments on vaccine data:
>
> "This data set is a unique look at those who have been vaccinated in the real world outside trials, and so for the post vaccine effects we see are mild and in the minority of people. It's interesting to see that those with previous COVID are more likely to experience these mild after effects than other subjects. This could be good news, as a larger response like this suggests that those getting a first dose after having had COVID are generating a stronger immune reaction and may get greater protection from just a single shot of the vaccine. We are urging as many people as possible to download the ZOE app and log their vaccines with us, so that we can independently monitor how we all react differently and how the vaccines impact the overall pandemic."

Discover more about your health

Visit the ZOE health Academy to learn more about your unique biology.

Visit ZOE

Other updates

Why scientists need you to complete your ZOE Health Profile

January 22nd, 2021

Our new Health Profile for all Contributors and Tests ZOE study the spread of the coronavirus (COVID) and understand more and might reduce the risk of chronic diseases. All we need is your time to complete it.

COVID testing is changing, keep logging your tests and symptoms in the ZOE app

January 21st, 2021

Since we launched the ZOE COVID Symptom Study app in March we have been asking people to log their tests and symptoms. Many people have logged their tests and symptoms in the app – whether negative or positive – to help us keep track of COVID-19.

Have you done your science today? Easy ways to log your daily health report

January 20th, 2021

The best way to contribute to the ZOE COVID Study is to log a quick health report every day. Read tips on how to 5 logging into your daily routine and why it is all important to keep track of your symptoms and COVID tests.

COVID dips vs as cases now falling for second time this year

January 20th, 2021

According to ZOE COVID Study Incidence figures, it now there are currently 54,157 new daily symptomatic cases of COVID in the UK on average, based on PCR and LF test data from up to three days ago.

COVID peaks for second time this year

January 20th, 2021

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What does Omicron mean for the future of COVID?

January 20th, 2021

In this video, our experts answer your questions about the highly transmissible Omicron variant causing new infections across the country and what it means for a mass rollout and what it can tell us about the future of COVID.

UK back to 200,000 a day

January 20th, 2021

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Omicron bounces back

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Omicron falling fast, but now spreads detected in children

January 20th, 2021

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Introducing the ZOE Studio Hub

January 20th, 2021

We're excited to share the first steps in our plan to improve human health science as we look beyond COVID to other major health conditions.

Omicron wave has finally peaked

January 20th, 2021

According to ZOE COVID Study Incidence figures, it now there are currently 54,157 new daily symptomatic cases of COVID in the UK on average, based on PCR and LF test data from up to three days ago.

Omicron spread slows but cases hit vulnerable over 75s

January 20th, 2021

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Cases set to break 200,000

January 20th, 2021

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COVID cases explode

January 20th, 2021

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Everything we know so far about Omicron

December 21st, 2021

Our scientists are working hard to understand the new variant of COVID, Omicron, and what it means for us and our health. We have put together what we know so far and what we still need to know about the new variant. This is where the hints lie at our Omicron Ginger Kim

Omicron and cold like symptoms rapidly taking over in London

December 21st, 2021

According to ZOE COVID Study Incidence figures, it now there are currently 54,157 new daily symptomatic cases of COVID in the UK on average, based on PCR and LF test data from up to three days ago.

How ZOE is shaping the future of healthcare

December 21st, 2021

In this webinar, our experts discuss the early signs of Omicron, how digital tools like apps are shaping healthcare and what we can expect for the future.

Third dose can save Christmas

December 20, 2021

According to ZOE COVID Study Incidence figures, it now there are currently 54,157 new daily symptomatic cases of COVID in the UK on average, based on PCR and LF test data from up to three days ago.

Don't cancel Christmas yet

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How ZOE is shaping the future of healthcare

December 20th, 2021

Digital tools like the ZOE COVID Study app are changing the way we do health research. Find out how it get involved and how tools like health questions from mother mole is also.

Are COVID booster shots safe?

December 20th, 2021

We've recorded a quarter of a million COVID boosters and first primary doses in the app. Our scientists are now analysing the data on safety and effectiveness. Here's what we know so far.

Cases at COVID infection guarantee protection antibodies?

December 20th, 2021

Our latest analysis of data from the ZOE COVID Study shows that one in five people who ever had COVID didn't go on to have detectable anti-S antibodies afterwards.

COVID cases have probably peaked for 2021

December 20th, 2021

According to ZOE COVID Study Incidence figures, it now there are currently 54,157 new daily symptomatic cases of COVID in the UK on average, based on PCR and LF test data from up to three days ago.

Had a COVID antibody test? Here's how to log your result

December 1, 2021

We've updated our antibody test screens to help you log your results accurately.

Vaccines and the immunosuppressed

December 1, 2021

In this webinar our experts answer all your questions about immunosuppression and COVID vaccinations including whether they are safe, how effective they are, and how you can protect yourself when infection rates are high.

Worryingly close to 100,000 new cases a day

November 30th, 2021

According to ZOE COVID Study Incidence figures, it now there are currently 54,157 new daily symptomatic cases of COVID in the UK on average, based on PCR and LF test data from up to three days ago.

Can a pill cure COVID?

December 2021

We take a look at the science behind the two drugs that have been put forward as COVID treatments, and what it means for you and your family.

COVID reaches new highs for 2021

November 30th, 2021

According to ZOE COVID Study Incidence figures, it now there are currently 54,157 new daily symptomatic cases of COVID in the UK on average, based on PCR and LF test data from up to three days ago.

What impact has COVID-19 had on cancer?

December 2, 2021

COVID-19 has had a big impact on cancer services, but it's still really important to get checked out by your doctor if something doesn't seem normal for you.

What's the difference between natural and vaccine immunity against COVID-19?

December 2, 2021

We compare the stability and effectiveness of natural immunity from COVID infection and the protection from vaccines.

Living with Long COVID summary

December 2, 2021

In this webinar, we talked about our personal experiences with Long COVID, and our experts discuss its definition, symptoms, and treatments.

Third wave reaches new peak

December 2, 2021

According to ZOE COVID Study Incidence figures, it now there are currently 54,157 new daily symptomatic cases of COVID in the UK on average, based on PCR and LF test data from up to three days ago.

Had a seasonal flu vaccine? You can tag it with ZOE

Sep 2, 2021

We've added the seasonal flu vaccine to our vaccine tagging scheme.

Do I have COVID or the flu? How to tell the difference

Updated 2 days ago

Some scientists and academics are speculating that the winter could see more cases of the flu than COVID. So what are the main differences between COVID and the flu and how can you protect yourself this winter?

Future-proofing our COVID estimates

Updated 1 month

Back in July, we updated our data methodology to minimise the impact of vaccinations on our estimates of COVID prevalence. We've been monitoring the performance of our model since then and found it continues to continue producing sane results. Here's how it's been performing.

COVID cases in children continue to climb

Updated 1 month

According to ZOE COVID Study Incidence figures, in total there are currently 50,000 new daily symptomatic cases of COVID in the UK on average, based on PCR and LFT test data from up to the days ago.

Does having COVID-19 affect mental health?

Updated 1 month

Data from ZOE COVID Study confirms observations that although feeling positive for COVID can have a negative impact on mental health, thankfully the effects are small and short-lived.

Can COVID-19 vaccines affect male fertility?

Updated 1 month

Several scientists about another twitter following COVID vaccination have raised concerns about potential impacts on male reproductive health and fertility. But is there really anything to be worried about?

COVID cases declining but remain high and unpredictable

Updated 1 month

According to ZOE COVID Study Incidence figures, in total there are currently 60,000 new daily symptomatic cases of COVID in the UK on average, based on PCR and LFT test data from up to the days ago.

Do I have COVID or a cold? How to tell the difference

Updated 1 month

Our tips for how to tell the difference between COVID and a cold, and when you should get tested.

COVID-19, pregnancy, fertility and vaccines: Your questions answered

Updated 2 days ago

In this webinar, our experts look at the evidence around COVID-19 and vaccination in pregnancy and whether vaccines affect fertility.

COVID cases no longer climbing as feared

Updated 1 month

According to ZOE COVID Study Incidence figures, in total there are currently 60,000 new daily symptomatic cases of COVID in the UK on average, based on PCR and LFT test data from up to the days ago.

ZOE to fight more health conditions

Updated 1 month

Since the start of COVID-19 we've pioneered data of other health concerns, and we're ramping up our efforts to expand the COVID foundation for other crucial conditions.

Double COVID vaccination halves risk of Long COVID

Updated 1 month

Two shots almost halve double vaccination halves the chances of someone contracting Long COVID. Here's what the research found.

COVID still rising after restriction-free summer

Updated 1 month

According to ZOE COVID Study Incidence figures, there are currently 51,000 new daily symptomatic cases of COVID in the UK on average, based on PCR and LFT test data from up to the days ago.

What to eat when you have COVID-19 or long COVID

Updated 1 month

Getting the right nutrition is important when you're ill. While there are few specific recommendations for people with COVID, or long COVID, or long COVID, COVID, there's some advice to be from other viral illnesses.

Is loss of smell still an important symptom of COVID-19?

Updated 1 month

Your dark helpers show that loss of smell (anosmia) was a key symptom of COVID-19 in the early days of the pandemic. But as the virus has evolved, has this changed and is it still a key symptom? Let's find it more scientic.

UK cases hold steady

Updated 1 month

According to ZOE COVID Study Incidence figures, there are currently 43,000 new daily symptomatic cases of COVID in the UK on average, based on PCR and LFT test data from up to the days ago.

Should you self-isolate after being 'pinged'? Here are the signs to look out for

Updated 1 month

People who have been 'pinged' after coming into contact with a COVID case are now likely to test positive if they have one of the 10 symptoms of COVID.

Fall in UK COVID cases stalls

Updated 1 month

According to ZOE COVID Study Incidence figures, there are currently 46,000 new daily symptomatic cases of COVID in the UK on average, based on PCR and LFT test data from up to the days ago.

We've updated the COVID tests screen

August 26, 2021

We've updated the app you log, view and organise different COVID-19 test results in the app.

COVID cases are falling

August 12, 2021

According to ZOE COVID Study Incidence figures, there are currently 46,000 new daily symptomatic cases of COVID in the UK on average. This is a decline of 35,000 cases taken from last week, suggesting that we are now past the peak of the Kent wave.

Should I still wear a mask?

July 29, 2021

We've put your questions on face coverings, including whether they protect against COVID, and when and where you should consider wearing one.

Do children get long COVID?

August 12, 2021

King's researchers have published a study in Lancet Child and Adolescent Health showing that 1 in 20 children who test positive for COVID-19 experience one symptom for more than four weeks, and 1 in 50 experience symptoms for more than eight weeks.

Detect COVID-19 sooner by introducing more symptoms

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Adding the new COVID-19 infection survey symptoms to the app would help identify all three 'cough and loss of taste or smell' needed to trigger a test, because two found.

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7 tips to live with COVID after 'Freedom Day'

July 19, 2021

Plus, the Scientific Advice to be tips for managing COVID-19 after so called 'Freedom Day' and beyond.

New cases plateau ahead of Freedom Day

July 19, 2021

According to ZOE COVID Study Incidence figures, it's estimated that among unvaccinated people in the UK there are currently 36,000 new daily symptomatic COVID-19 cases on average, based on PCR and lateral flow tests up to the days ago [1]. A decrease of 12% from 42,000 last week.

What is the Delta variant and why is it so dominant?

July 19, 2021

In our latest webinar, our experts discuss what the Delta variant is, why it has become so dominant, and whether the vaccines are still protecting us.

7 ways to improve diet quality and protect against COVID-19

July 12, 2021

Eating a plant-rich diet can help to protect against COVID-19. Here are our top 7tips to support healthy eating during the pandemic and beyond.

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June 21, 2021

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New interactive map shows local vaccination levels

June 21, 2021

See the local level of vaccinations where you live, and how your area compares to the national map.

How does COVID affect children?

How does COVID-19 affect children?

September 2, 2021

In this webinar, our experts discuss how serious COVID affects children, the risks of long COVID, and whether we should be vaccinating kids.

COVID bounces back as cases start to rise

Updated 1 month

According to ZOE COVID Study Incidence figures, there are currently 51,000 new daily symptomatic cases of COVID in the UK on average, based on PCR and lateral flow tests up to the days ago.

COVID vaccines: are they working?

Updated 1 month

In this webinar, our experts discuss how well COVID-19 vaccines are working and whether we'll need booster shots in the future.

Is COVID vaccine protection fading?

August 29, 2021

Our latest analysis shows that protection from the Pfizer and AstraZeneca jabs can start to fade within six months.

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June 21, 2021

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Is sneezing a symptom of COVID-19?

June 18, 2021

Sneezing more than usual can be a sign of COVID-19 in people who've been vaccinated, but not in those who are unvaccinated.

Vaccines hold back the tide as latest wave shows signs of approaching peak

June 17, 2021

According to ZOE COVID Study figures, it is estimated that among unvaccinated people in the UK there are currently 12,830 new daily symptomatic cases of COVID on average, based on PCR test data from up to five days ago [*].

Happy birthday, I got you COVID! How a party turned into a super-spreader event

June 10, 2021

Annie had been itching to get back to seeing her friends after more than a year of endless lockdowns. So when one of them turned 30, it seemed like a perfect excuse to get the gang together for a party.

Cases rising rapidly among those with incomplete vaccinations

June 10, 2021

According to ZOE COVID Study figures, it is estimated there are currently 11,908 new symptomatic cases of COVID in the UK on average, based on PCR test data from up to five days ago. This compares to 5,677 daily cases a week ago, an increase of 110%.

How has the pandemic affected our mental health? And does having the virus impact mental wellbeing?

June 10, 2021

In our latest webinar, our experts discuss how COVID-19 has affected our mental health and discuss some of the tactics you can use to help your wellbeing as the effects of pandemic drag on.

Has a wave started in the young?

June 3, 2021

According to ZOE COVID Study figures, it is estimated there are currently 4,608 new symptomatic cases of COVID in the UK on average, based on swab test data from up to five days ago [*]. This compares to 2,550 daily cases a week ago, an increase of 45%.

ZOE's COVID Study awarded extra funds to continue critical work

June 1, 2021

We've been awarded further grant funding from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to help us continue our essential work into COVID-19 and beyond. None of this would have been possible without our amazing contributors.

What's my risk of COVID-19 after vaccination?

May 27, 2021

Our latest analysis of data from the ZOE COVID Study app reveals who is most at risk from being reinfected with COVID-19 after vaccination.

Full results of our mental health survey

May 26, 2021

More than 700,000 of you took part in our survey looking at the impact of the pandemic on mental health. Here's what we found.

UK rates holding steady in spite of Indian variant

May 20, 2021

According to ZOE COVID Study figures, there are currently 2750 new symptomatic cases of COVID in the UK on average, indicating no significant change from last week, in spite of concerns around the Indian variant.

COVID cases up but milder infections in vaccinated and in the young

May 13, 2021

This week the ZOE COVID Study figures reflect an updated methodology, accounting for the large number of vaccinated individuals within the data set.

COVID estimates revised after change to methodology

May 12, 2021

We've updated how we calculate daily new and active cases of COVID-19 in the UK, accounting for the high number of vaccinated contributors. As a result, our estimate of COVID incidence has slightly increased.

Coming soon: results of our mental health study

May 10, 2021

As part of Mental Health Awareness Week, we're sharing some initial findings from our recent mental health survey. Here's what we've learned so far.

COVID under control as milder disease emerges in post-vaccine infections

May 6, 2021

According to ZOE COVID Study figures, there are currently 971 new symptomatic cases of COVID in the UK on average, based on swab test data from up to five days ago, a decrease of 7% from last week.

Low COVID rates force rethink of surveillance study data

April 29, 2021

According to the ZOE COVID Study figures, there are currently 1,046 new symptomatic cases of COVID in the UK on average, based on swab test data from up to five days ago

Our latest analysis of COVID vaccine reports is out now

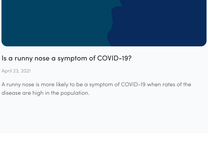
April 28, 2021

Our analysis of vaccine reports from more than 600,000 ZOE COVID Symptom Study contributors is published today in the leading journal, Lancet Infectious Diseases.

How to tell the difference between COVID-19 symptoms and vaccine after effects

April 28, 2021

The after effects of your COVID jab can be very similar to COVID-19 symptoms. Here's how to tell the difference and know when to get a test.



Is a runny nose a symptom of COVID-19?

April 22, 2021

A runny nose is more likely to be a symptom of COVID-19 when rates of the disease are high in the population.

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