

**VACCINE ASSIST PROGRAMME
BACKGROUND TO POSTER SET 5:
BEWARE OF FALSE COVID-19 INFORMATION**

1. What must I know?

- How do I know what to believe about COVID-19?
- Were the vaccines developed too fast to be safe?
- Do the COVID-19 vaccines cause blood clots?
- Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?
- Do vaccines contain a microchip to track me?
- Are governments and big businesses just trying to make money out of vaccines?
- Can vaccines change my DNA?

2. How will I explain it?

- **How do I know what to believe about COVID-19?**

Widespread fake news and misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines is leading people to question the COVID-19 vaccines. This is a big threat to the health and wellbeing of all Namibians. Just as all the false information around HIV caused so many to die unnecessarily; so too could all the false information about COVID-19 vaccines cause unnecessary suffering and harm.

The speed at which COVID-19 vaccines have been developed and the political pressure to make them available as soon as possible have led people to question their safety. Added to that are people who believe ALL vaccines are dangerous (the so-called “anti vaccers”) and popular social media sites like Facebook and Instagram, who have struggled to control the spread of false content around COVID-19 vaccines on their platforms.

We each have a responsibility to ourselves and others to make sure the information we use to make our decisions is based on fact. This includes any information we hear from friends or find online about COVID-19. It is crucial that we check the accuracy of what we read, access our information from credible sources, and do all we can to avoid spreading misinformation.

Access to reliable health information is as important as access to health care. COVID-19 vaccinations are a vital tool in the fight to stop the spread of COVID-19. Keep yourself properly informed about COVID-19 vaccination, so that you can make well-informed decisions.

- **Were the vaccines developed too fast to be safe?**

No! The COVID-19 vaccine trials and development were done speedily, due to the urgency of fighting the pandemic before thousands more people died. But they had to pass rigorous safety and effectiveness tests in all the countries making and/or distributing the vaccines. So although the vaccines were developed very quickly, they were still subject to all the normal safety protocols. No step in the development, testing or approval of the COVID-19 vaccines has been skipped.

We were able to develop vaccines fast because scientists and governments around the world worked together and shared information and technology in a way that has never been achieved before. Lots of funding was made available to speed up the process too.

- **Do the COVID-19 vaccines cause blood clots?**

The risk of developing blood clots from the COVID-19 vaccination is extremely low. In fact, you are 8 to 10 times more likely to develop a blood clot as a result of COVID-19 infection as you are from the vaccine. All around the world, various health departments and organisations have encouraged vaccination and said the benefits far outweigh the risk.

To put it in perspective, your chances of developing a blood clot:

- due to COVID-19 vaccination: 4 in 1 million (0.0004%)
- due to lifestyle and/or a family history of blood clots: 1290 in 1 million (0.13%)
- due to COVID-19 disease: 147 000 in 1 million (14.7%)

- **Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?**

No! COVID-19 vaccines do not contain any of the live virus that causes COVID-19 so they CANNOT give you COVID-19.

The vaccines use various methods to train your immune system to fight off COVID-19 before you contract it. The result is that when you do become infected, you experience less severe illness. One of the methods includes the use of harmless pieces of the virus.

You may experience some mild side effects after you have received the vaccine - these are signs that your immune system is responding to the vaccine. Side effects include flu-like symptoms such as fatigue, muscle aches, headaches, or fever. But you would not test positive for COVID-19 if you had the vaccine.

- **Do vaccines contain a microchip to track me?**

No! The vaccine manufacturers publish ingredient lists for the vaccines. They contain the DNA or mRNA elements that stimulate the body's immune system to create a strong immune response against the COVID-19 virus, fats that help to deliver the vaccine elements into your cells, as well as other common vaccine ingredients.

There is no vaccine "microchip" and there is no evidence to support claims that such a move is planned. Receiving a vaccine will not allow people to be tracked and personal information would not be entered into a database.

If people were truly worried about being tracked via microchip, they need look no further than their cell phones! GPS micro chips that are installed on mobile phones provide both tracking and navigation data as well as the phone's communication activity. It makes no sense to refuse a vaccine because you're worried about being tracked when you carry your cell phone with you wherever you go.

- **Are governments and big businesses just trying to make money out of vaccines?**

No! The COVID-19 crisis has caused massive upheaval across the globe and no nation has been spared. So many governments have therefore entered into direct talks with vaccine makers to ensure an adequate and speedy supply of vaccines for their countries.

The fastest way to return to our way of life is through ensuring that the majority of the population are protected from the virus. Vaccines are the simplest and most effective way to do this.

- **Can vaccines change my DNA?**

No! Vaccines work by stimulating the body the same way the virus would if someone were infected. That means when you receive the vaccine, your body sees something that looks like the COVID-19 virus, which in turn triggers your immune system, so your body is ready to fight the virus if you are exposed.

The vaccine does not work on the DNA of the body.

3. Summarise what has been learnt:

- Widespread misinformation has led people to question the COVID-19 vaccines, threatening the health and wellbeing of all Namibians.
- We have a responsibility to ourselves and others to make sure the information we use to make our decisions is based on fact. This includes any information we hear from friends or find online about COVID-19.
- It is crucial that we check the accuracy of what we read, access our information from credible sources, and do all we can to avoid spreading misinformation.
- Access to reliable health information is as important as access to health care. Keep yourself properly informed about COVID-19 vaccination, so that you can make well-informed decisions.
- **COVID-19 vaccines are safe.** We were able to develop vaccines fast because scientists and governments around the world worked together and shared information and technology in a way that has never been achieved before. But all the vaccines were still subject to all the normal safety protocols.
- **The risk of developing blood clots from the COVID-19 vaccination is extremely low.** You are 8 to 10 times more likely to develop a blood clot as a result of COVID-19 infection as you are from the vaccine, so the benefits of vaccination far outweigh the risk.
- **COVID-19 vaccines do not contain any of the live virus that causes COVID-19 so they CANNOT give you COVID-19.** You may experience some mild side effects after you have received the vaccine – which may feel like flu – but these are signs that your immune system is responding to the vaccine. You would not test positive for COVID-19 if you had the vaccine.
- **There is no tracking device or microchip inside the vaccines.** All vaccine manufacturers publish ingredient lists for their vaccines, so we know exactly what it is in them. Of course, there is a GPS microchip tracking you in your cell phone!
- **Big business and Government are not pushing vaccines because they want to make a profit.** COVID-19 has caused great human and economic suffering across the world. The fastest way to return to a normal way of life is by protecting ourselves from the virus. Vaccines are the most effective way of doing this.

4. Points to discuss with the group:

- Where do you get most of your COVID-19 vaccination knowledge from?
- How do you check what you hear for accuracy?

Sources:

<https://www.gov.za/covid-19/vaccine/myths>

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<https://www.1life.co.za/blog/myths-covid-vaccine>

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