VACCINE ASSIST PROGRAMME
BACKGROUND TO POSTER SET 4:
COVID-19 VACCINE SIDE-EFFECTS

1. What must I know?

- Will I have any side-effects after getting the COVID-19 vaccine?
- What are the most common side-effects?
- What should I do for these side-effects?
- When should I start to worry about side-effects?
- Once I've been vaccinated, must I still wear a mask?

2. How will I explain it?

- **Will I have any side-effects after getting the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Most people will feel fine after their vaccination. Some people may experience some mild side-effects, but this is nothing to worry about. Side effects are really just a part of your immune system's natural reaction to a vaccine. It is normal and shows that your body is learning how to fight COVID-19. Not experiencing a reaction, however, is normal too. If you do have any side-effects, they should only last a day or two.

Immediately after your vaccination, you will be asked to wait 15 minutes so the medical staff can observe how you have reacted to the vaccine and be sure that you do not experience any serious side-effects.

- **What are the most common side-effects?**

On your arm:
- Pain, redness and/or swelling where you had the injection

In the rest of your body:
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Joint pain
- Chills
- Fever
- Nausea

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- **What should I do for these side-effects?**

Most of the side-effects can be treated with over-the-counter treatments, like pain medication. To reduce fever, drink plenty of fluids, dress lightly and take paracetamol unless you have a medical condition that does not allow you to use it. To reduce pain and discomfort where you were injected, put a clean, cool, wet cloth over the area. For headaches, you can take paracetamol as directed on the box.

- **When should I start to worry about the side-effects?**

If you are feeling very unwell, or if your symptoms last more than two or so days, then contact CareWorks or see your doctor.

You should seek medical advice if:
- The redness or tenderness where you were injected gets worse after 24 hours
- You are struggling to breathe, develop a rash that is very itchy and is spreading, feel like your heart is beating out of your chest, feel lightheaded, or suffer a loss of consciousness
- Your side-effects are worrying you and/or do not seem to be going away after a few days

Mild side effects, such as fever, painful injection site, headache or mild flu-like illness do not need to be reported. However, if an allergic reaction or more severe side-effects presents, consult with your doctor.

- **Once I've been vaccinated, must I still wear a mask?**

It takes time for your body to build protection after any vaccination. People are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after their second shot. You should keep using all the tools available to protect yourself and others until you are fully vaccinated.

Once you are fully vaccinated, chances are you will be protected from COVID-19. Should you still become infected, the vaccination will prevent serious illness, hospitalisation and death due to COVID-19. However, even though you are now safer, you still have a duty to protect those around you and to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

This means you must still wear a mask, practice social distancing, and wash your hands regularly.

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3. **Summarise what has been learnt:**

- Most people will feel fine after their vaccination, with no side-effects.
- Some people may experience some mild side-effects. This is part of your immune system's natural reaction to a vaccine.
- If you do have any side-effects, they should only last a day or two.
- The most common side-effects reported are:
    - On your arm: Pain, redness and/or swelling where you had the injection
    - In the rest of your body: tiredness, headache, muscle pain, joint pain, chills, fever, nausea
- If you are feeling very unwell, or if your symptoms last more than two or so days, then contact CareWorks or see your doctor.
- It takes time for your body to build protection after any vaccination. It will take two weeks after your final vaccination to achieve full protection.
- Once you are fully vaccinated, chances are you will be protected from COVID-19. Should you still become infected, the vaccination will prevent serious illness, hospitalisation and death due to COVID-19. However, even though you are now safer, you still have a duty to protect those around you and to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- This means you must still wear a mask, practice social distancing, and wash your hands regularly.

4. **Points to discuss with the group:**

- Why do some people experience side-effects after vaccination?
- Why do you still need to follow COVID-19 safety protocols after you have been vaccinated?

Sources:
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