COVID-19 and HIV

October 2021

Vaccines

- Current WHO recommended and EUL – listed COVID-19 vaccines (AstraZeneca/Oxford, Johnson and Johnson, Moderna, Pfizer/BioNTech, Sinopharm, and Sinovac) are safe for people living with HIV.
- No pharmacological interactions have been reported between COVID-19 vaccines and antiretroviral medications, which people living with HIV should continue to take after vaccination to maintain health and well-being.

Increased risk

- Independent of immune status, many people living with HIV have an increased risk of more severe COVID-19 due to diverse co-morbidities.
- People living with HIV can have a greater prevalence of the known risk factors for COVID-19 acquisition and complications, such as heart disease, kidney disease, diabetes, chronic pulmonary disease, obesity, as well as, other comorbidities and co-infections, like tuberculosis.

Continue ART

- Those who are on antiretroviral therapy (ART) must remain on it to reduce health risks and complications during COVID-19, including maintaining viral load suppression.
- Antiretroviral drugs cannot prevent or treat COVID-19 for people living with HIV.

Pregnancy and breastfeeding

- Pregnant and breastfeeding women living with HIV: Although no vertical transmission has been documented. Transmission of COVID-19 after birth via contact with infectious respiratory secretions is a concern.
- As with all confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases, symptomatic mothers who are breastfeeding or practicing skin-to-skin contact or kangaroo mother care should practice respiratory hygiene, including during feeding (for example, use of a medical mask when near a baby if the mother has respiratory symptoms), perform hand hygiene before and after contact with the baby, and routinely clean and disinfect surfaces with which the symptomatic mother has been in contact.

Same COVID-19 precautions

- People living with HIV are advised to take the same COVID-19 precautions as recommended for the general population:
  - wash hands often;
  - practice cough etiquette;
  - ensure physical distancing;
  - wear masks;
  - seek medical care if symptomatic;
  - self-isolate if one develops symptoms, etc.
  - and of course, take the two doses of the vaccine as soon as possible.

Do it all – 6 precautions

- Keep your distance
- Wash your hands frequently
- Cough & sneeze into your elbow
- Wear a mask
- Ventilate or open windows
- Get vaccinated as soon as vaccine becomes available