

## Weekly update from Woodchurch Surgery

I've taken a week away from the Surgery "on holiday" which has been a good chance to recharge and enjoy the false-start of summer on Tuesday. Covid isn't going away yet and we continue to have the odd case locally. We have some new guidance and the latest has been quite interesting relating to allergies and we are pushing hard to get all the second doses done for those over 65; immunocompromised people and their household; those with chronic diseases especially if over 50; health and social care workers.

Apparently the Pfizer and Moderna mRNA vaccines contain "polyethylene glycol" (PEG) which are chemicals commonly found in medicines, household products and cosmetics. PEG allergy is really rare but may be the cause behind previous unexplained severe allergy or anaphylaxis (when you need adrenaline). The MHRA (medicines regulators) aren't sure if PEG allergy is the cause of allergic reactions after the Pfizer vaccine so are recommending to avoid it only if you have had unexplained anaphylaxis in the past. So far the rate of anaphylaxis from the AstraZeneca vaccine is the same as all non-Covid vaccines. Apparently the AstraZeneca vaccine doesn't contain PEG but does contain a similar compound called "polysorbate 80" which is also commonly in medicines and vaccines so if you have been ok with common vaccines like the flu jab you should be just fine.

In short if you have a history of allergic reactions to the ingredients of the vaccines then you shouldn't have it, but those with any other known allergies (such as a food allergy) can have either type of vaccine. People with previous unexplained severe allergies should have AstraZeneca in case it was caused by PEG allergy.

With Easter upon us the team at the Surgery had an Easter Egg swap which was popular and while I try to stay away from chocolate post heart attack I have briefly googled the benefits of chocolate. Apparently it helps raise your HDL (good) cholesterol, can lower your blood pressure, improve memory and lower stroke and heart attack risk. I think that gives me the green light to get stuck in now and I have to make up for last year too – just don't tell the dentist.

I'm looking forward to getting back to work on Tuesday and wish everyone a great Easter weekend.

Best wishes on behalf of the Surgery

Jack Hickey - GP