

COVID-19 vaccination and lymphoedema



Whilst it is great news that the COVID-19 vaccine is being rolled out, the LSN has been contacted asking for advice from people with, or at risk of, upper limb lymphoedema.

It is very important that you liaise with your GP about your own individual situation as you may have other conditions that need to be taken into account but Professor Mortimer has kindly given some guidance in relation to lymphoedema and the COVID-19 vaccination.

People with lymphoedema do not have a problem with their immune system generally, it is only in the region affected by lymphoedema where immune cells do not work properly.

They do work properly elsewhere in the body, providing you do not have a rare genetic form of lymphoedema affecting all of the body and if this applies to you, you will have already been told this.

It is therefore safe, in terms of lymphoedema, to have the COVID-19 vaccination and it should work in the same way as in anybody else. However, for those with upper limb swelling or at risk of developing upper limb lymphoedema, it is recommended that injections should be in the unaffected arm.

If you have swelling or are at risk of developing lymphoedema in both arms, it is recommended that both injections should be in either the thigh or buttocks.

If you have four-limb swelling, the least affected limb should be used.

There are currently 3 vaccines approved for use. The advice to any patient is to accept whichever you are offered. At this time, we do not know if there is any benefit/risk difference between the vaccines.