

WHAT ASTRAZENECA-OXFORD COVID-19 VACCINE SUSPENSION IN EUROPE MEANS FOR INDIA'S COVISHIELD

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Denmark temporarily suspended [AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine](#) shots after reports of cases of blood clots forming earlier this week. Meanwhile, Ireland also recommended the temporary deferral of the vaccine after three health workers in Norway, who had recently received it, are being treated in the hospital for bleeding, blood clots and a low count of blood platelets.

Several other countries including Austria, Estonia, Lithuania, Norway, Iceland and Thailand have temporarily suspended the Oxford University-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine shots over blood clot fears.

Amid the controversy, both World Health Organization and European Medicines Agency, however, have vouched for the benefits of the vaccine.

On Friday, WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris told reporters said, "Yes, we should continue using the AstraZeneca vaccine." And also added: "There is no indication to not use it". The European Medicines Agency on Thursday, meanwhile, said its benefits outweighed its risks and could continue to be administered.

What does it mean for India?

The Indian version of Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine is known as [Covishield](#). Serum Institute of India, the world's largest vaccine manufacturer by volume, joined hands with AstraZeneca to produce 1 billion doses of its COVID-19 vaccine. Several countries have ordered the vaccine from SII.

Following the suspension of the vaccine by several countries, the central government has decided to conduct a deeper review of post-vaccination side-effects from the Oxford-AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine, as per a news report by *AFP* on Saturday.

"We are looking at all the adverse events, particularly serious adverse events like deaths and hospitalisation. We will come back if we find anything of concern," N.K. Arora, a member of India's national task force on COVID-19 told *AFP*.

Arora said there was "no immediate issue of concern as the number of adverse events (in India) is very, very low. We are relooking at (adverse events that were reported) to see if there is any issue of blood clotting."

"As of yesterday there were 59 or 60 deaths, and they were all coincidental," the doctor said, according to *AFP*.

"In fact there is a real effort from our side that once the complete investigation is done, to put its results in the public domain, on the ministry of health website," Arora also told *AFP*.

Till now, India has reported 0.020% of Adverse Event Following Immunisation (AEFI), or side-effects, and 0.00025% hospitalisation. The vaccine hasn't been linked to any deaths in India.

As the world's largest COVID-19 vaccination drive is underway in the country, India has nearly administered three crore cumulative vaccination doses with a total of 2,97,38,409 through 5,10,400 sessions, as per the provisional report till 7 am on Sunday.

According to the health ministry, a total of 2,91,92,547 vaccine doses has been given as per the provisional report till 7 pm today.

(With inputs from agencies)

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