



Faith Based COVID Vaccination

[March 2021]

Introduction

Initial discussions with people in prison suggest that using peer to peer support or conversations with trusted authority figures is likely to increase the vaccination uptake in prisons.

This is a guide which focuses on the questions different faith or believe communities may have about the vaccination. The answers have been provided by the headquarters faith leaders.

Please share this document with your local faith leaders and, once your regimes allow it, with any residents who act as faith mentors. It would also be helpful if it could be included in appropriate newsletters and shared on noticeboards (as long as this does not encourage too many people to gather in one place!)

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Acknowledgement

With thanks to the following faith leaders for their input:

Rev'd Helen Dearnley

Anglican and Headquarters Chaplaincy Advisor (Female Estate and Private Estate)
Email: helen.dearnley@justice.gov.uk

Very Reverend Canon Paul Douthwaite

Roman Catholic Faith Advisor
Email: Paul.Douthwaite@CBCEW.Org.uk

Venerable Ajahn Khemadhammo OBE

The Buddhist Adviser
Email: ajahn.khemadhammo@angulimala.org.uk

Leonie Knapton

Christian Science Adviser
Email: christiansciencechaplains@gmail.com

Jay Marshall

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Faith Adviser
Email: chaplainjaylds@gmail.com

Rev'd Bob Wilson

Free Church Faith Adviser
Email: bob.wilson@freechurches.org.uk

Rick Fenton

Jehovah's Witnesses Faith Adviser
Email: prisondesk.GB@jw.org

Rev Michael Binstock MBE

HMPPS Jewish Faith Adviser
Email: revbinstock@btinternet.com

Ahtsham Ali

Muslim and Headquarters Adviser
Email: ahtsham.ali@justice.gov.uk

Helene Mobius

Pagan Adviser
Email: prisons@paganfederation.co.uk

Catherine Todd

Quaker Adviser
Email: catherine.todd@justice.gov.uk

Faith Based COVID Vaccination

Pankaj Sharma

Hindu Adviser

Email: pankajsharma032@gmail.com

Teddy Prout

Humanist

Email: teddy@humanists.uk

Gagandeep Singh

Deputy Sikh Faith Advisor

Email: Gagandeep.singh@justice.gov.uk

If you have any further questions about vaccinations, please email xxxx

If your questions specifically related to faith or belief and vaccinations or you believe something is missing from this document, then please email the respective Faith or Belief Adviser above.

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Anglican

Anglican Church (Church of England and Church in Wales)

Background

There is no faith reason or anything written in the scriptures which would mean that someone from the Anglican faith should be reluctant to have a vaccination.

Questions

- Q1.** Are there any reasons why Anglicans should not be vaccinated against COVID-19?
- A. All Anglican faith authorities in England and Wales encourage all people to receive the vaccine if they are clinically able to.

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Buddhists

Buddhists

Background

Buddhists may object to being vaccinated because both vaccines have been tested on animals. Buddhism teaches and promotes compassion and many individual Buddhists belong to groups that forbid the killing of any living creature.

The early Buddhist texts do not expressly forbid the consumption of meat and state that provided an individual has neither seen, heard, nor suspected that the animal has been deliberately killed for that individual to eat, then the meat is allowable. The focus should be on whether the karmic connection to the killing is a distant one. This same principle should be applied to the vaccine.

Questions

Q1: Are Buddhists allowed to be vaccinated against COVID-19?

A: Yes, because Buddhism promotes compassion to all living things. Should someone who refused the vaccination end up infecting someone else, then that would be very serious karma.

Q2: Do the vaccines contain any animal products?

A: No, but all vaccines have to be tested on animals because this is a regulatory requirement for any vaccines released in the UK.

Q3: Doesn't that make the vaccine wrong for us?

A: Vaccination clinical trials were not done with any of us specifically in mind or at our personal request. It is therefore a distant karmic connection. However, if we refused the vaccine and then became infected and infected others, this would be much more immediate and reprehensible.

Q4: So you think we ought to have it?

A: The Buddhist advisor Venerable Ajahn Khemadhammo OBE to HMPPS has said:

"I would say that one is duty bound, on compassionate grounds if nothing else, to take the vaccine."

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Christian Scientists

Christian Scientist

Questions

- Q1.** Does the Christian Science Church have a policy about vaccinations?
- A. It does not have a specific policy. Within the boundaries of the law and official guidelines, individual Christian Scientists make their own decisions about health matters. However, Christian Scientists place high value on the Golden Rule. When deciding about vaccination or other health issues, Christian Scientists try to choose a course of action that is appropriate for themselves, their families, work colleagues and the community around them.
- Q2.** Should a Christian Scientist accept the vaccination if it is offered to them?
- A. This would be a decision for the individual Christian Scientist to make for himself or herself. Some will accept it and some will not. However, for well over a century the Church has encouraged Christian Scientists to obey official healthcare guidelines concerning vaccinations, quarantines, the reporting of contagious diseases and the like.
- Q3.** Are there circumstances in which a Christian Scientist would decline vaccination (unless required by law)?
- A. Typically, Christian Scientists prefer to rely on a prayer and Bible-based approach when dealing with health related issues. It is up to individuals to decide if they will be vaccinated.
- Q4.** There are concerns about possible side effects from vaccination, what is the Christian Science view?
- A. Christian Scientists take heart in the spirit of the words of the Psalmist who wrote '(God) *who healeth all thy diseases*' [Ps103:3]. Christian Science, based on Biblical teachings and particularly those of Christ Jesus in the Gospels, teaches that disease or any other adverse physical condition is capable of being healed. Typically, Christian Scientists will turn to prayer to help people cope during these times.
- Q5** What does Mary Baker Eddy (the founder of Christian Science) say about vaccinations?
- A. Over a period of many years Eddy consistently encouraged Christian Scientists to 'follow the law' and that if the law mandated vaccination then Christian Scientists should agree to be vaccinated and use their practice of Christian Science for protection from side effects.

Church of Jesus Christ of the Later Day Saints

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

Questions

- Q1.** Should members of the Church receive any of the Vaccinations for COVID-19?
- A. The Church urges its members, employees and missionaries to be good global citizens, and get vaccinated to help stop the pandemic and keep themselves and others safe. Individuals can make their own decisions about vaccination, and the Church encourages them to speak with medical professionals about their personal circumstances and needs.
- Q2.** Does the vaccination contravene the Word of Wisdom?
- A. The vaccination does not go against or break the Word of Wisdom.
- Q3.** Does having the vaccination break any other of the Lord's commandments?
- A. No. As in Article of Faith 12. We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honouring, and sustaining the law.
- Q4.** Are Church Leaders having the vaccination?
- A. The Prophet, President Russell M Nelson and other leaders and their wives have had the vaccination already.

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Free Churches

Free Churches

Questions

Q1. Do any of the currently licensed vaccines contain cells from aborted fetuses?

A. No.

Q2. Was any testing carried out on the cells of aborted fetuses?

A. No (tests were carried out on “cell lines” grown from two abortions carried out over 40 years ago).

Q3. Am I denying my faith in any way by trusting a vaccine to protect me rather than God?

A. No; the Christian faith is complex and depends on many things. Christians throughout time have been very happy to use those items which God has given us the creativity to develop as part of the creation mandate.

B.

Q4. Is taking the vaccine collaborating with some larger “world order” which has demonic intent as suggested in biblical apocalyptic literature.

A. Jesus was very clear that we must love one another, as well as love God. The “Golden Rule” could apply here too; when we take a vaccine to protect others, we are doing an act of love for them, as we would hope they would do towards us.

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Hindu

Hindu

Questions

Q1. Can Hindu prisoners receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

A. Yes

Q2. Does the COVID-19 vaccine contain trace of beef?

A. No. It has been categorically assured that both vaccines (AstraZeneca and Pfizer/Bio NTech) do not contain human or animal products.

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Humanist

Background

Humanists trust to the scientific method when trying to understand how the universe works and make their ethical decisions based on reason and empathy. Guided by concern for the welfare and fulfilment of human beings and of other sentient animals, humanists try to make a positive contribution to building a better society.

Questions

Q1. Can prisoners who consider themselves as Humanist receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

A: Yes, the overwhelming majority of humanists are strongly in favour of vaccination, and humanist organisations, including Humanists UK, are encouraging vaccine uptake. The coronavirus vaccines are safe and effective and receiving it, even if the person is at low-risk from COVID-19 themselves, will mean they are significantly less likely to pass it to someone with much higher risk.

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Jehovah's Witnesses

Jehovah's Witnesses

Background

The only reason someone registered with Jehovah's Witnesses might hesitate to accept a vaccine on religious grounds would be if blood products were used in its manufacture. Even then, it would be a matter for each one to decide based on his or her conscience.

Questions

Q1. Does the COVID-19 vaccine contain blood products or fractions?

A. No. This has been confirmed for the vaccines produced by AstraZeneca, Moderna, and Pfizer/BioNTech.

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Judaism

Judaism

Questions

Q1. Are there any reasons why a Jewish prisoner may not take the COVID-19 vaccine?

A. The leading strictly orthodox rabbinic authorities around the world have emphasised the religious duty that Jews must take every possible safeguard for their well-being. This is an actual Torah law.
Therefore, the vaccination against COVID-19 is obligatory.

Q2. Does the vaccine contain any pork products or shellfish?

A. There are no pork or shellfish products in the vaccine and it is considered Kosher

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Muslim

Muslim

Questions

Q1. Are each of the three vaccines (Pfizer/BioNTech, Oxford/AstraZeneca, and Moderna) halal?

A. Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines are Halal and Shariah-compliant, and stamps of approval have come from the British Islamic Medical Association (BIMA), the Assembly of Muslim Jurists of America (AMJA), the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, and the Wifaqul Ulema (Unity of Scholars) UK, who state “thus in the light of the available data, official statement and clarification, we have concluded the Pfizer/BioNTech/Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine to be permissible for British Muslims”.

Q2. Do these vaccines contain any animal products (e.g. gelatine) – and if so, would they then be halal?

A. All three manufacturers say they contain no animal products. The manufacturers have clarified that pork products are not part of the vaccines, though pork-derived gelatine is known to be used as a stabiliser for safe storage and transportation of vaccines. Numerous Muslim scholars have in the past allowed the use of non-halal ingredients, by invoking a concept known as “transformation” (*istihala*). Islam places huge importance to the sanctity of human life and emphasises safeguarding it.

Q3. Do any of these vaccines use human tissue (e.g. foetal cells) in their development – and if so would they then be halal?

A. The COVID-19 vaccines produced by Pfizer and Moderna do not rely on cell line technologies, and so there is no reason to be concerned.

The vaccine produced by AstraZeneca, was developed using a cell line that originally came from kidney cells from a female foetus aborted in the 1970s. None of the original foetus cells have been used in the vaccine, and no cells are in the vaccine that is given to people.

Q4. The vaccines were tested on animals before being made available to humans. What is Islam’s stance on this – and does this affect the halal status?

A. Animals are used in different ways in the creation of vaccines, such as to show they are safe, and to develop new ways of making vaccines.

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With few exceptions, harming animals is not permissible in Islam. Most scholars allow the use of animals for testing and research purposes, based on the Shariah rule of necessity. However, such tests and experiments must be limited to the extent of necessity and should be carried out in a manner which involves least pain. The Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Shaykh Al Uthymeen, was once asked about animal testing for medication and responded: "I do not see anything wrong with this, because of the general application of the words of Allah (interpretation of the meaning): 'It is He Who created for you all that is on earth' [al-Baqarah 2:29]. But it is essential to choose the easiest form of experimentation (that which is least painful to the animals)."

Q5. Does being vaccinated during the day in Ramadan affect the fast according to each one of the four madhahibs?

- A. The vast majority of Muslim scholars believe it does not break the fast. Most scholars today would argue that having an injection is not the same as 'eating or drinking'. You will find a small number of scholars who believe injections break the fast, but the vast majority believe it does not do so, unless the injection contains nourishment (i.e. a glucose drip). Many Muslim countries have announced this fatwa in light of the impending Covid vaccination programme which will be continuing during Ramadan insha'Allah.

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Pagan

Pagan

Questions

Q1. What is the Pagan point of view on vaccination?

- A. Hippocrates was considered the father of medicine and today, medical students take a Hippocratic Oath, in which – amongst other things – they promise to “first, do no harm”. This is also an ethical position that most Pagans still hold to, when considering the consequences of their actions or inaction on both themselves and others.

Q2. I am a Pagan Vegan, are there any animal derivatives in the COVID vaccines?

- A. Vegetarian and veganism is an ethical lifestyle choice, it is not a Pagan Religious requirement. However, it can be said that all Pagans honour and respect the sacrifices that animals make for us every day and do take a principled stance on how they are treated.
The vaccines made by Pfizer/BioNTech, Oxford/AstraZeneca and Moderna that were recently approved for use in the UK do not contain any animal-derived ingredients.

Q3. Are the COVID vaccines tested on animals?

All vaccination in the UK were tested on animals, however medication, including vaccinations, is still considered vegan where alternatives do not exist.

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Quaker

Quaker

Questions

- Q1.** Are there any reasons why a Quaker prisoner may not take the COVID-19 Vaccine?
- A.** Each Friend does their own discernment about it Discernment is a process of deep spiritual reflection where Quakers will put aside their pre-conceptions and listen to where the spirit is leading them.

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Roman Catholic

Roman Catholic Church

Background

Some have questioned the use of the Astra Zeneca vaccine since it has been developed from cell-lines originating from the cells of an aborted foetus in 1983.

The [Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith](#) and the [Pontifical Academy of Life](#) have expressed the view that one may in good conscience and for a grave reason receive a vaccine sourced in this way, provided that there is a sufficient moral distance between the present administration of the vaccine and the original wrongful action.

In the COVID-19 pandemic, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales judged that this grave reason exists and that one does not sin by receiving the vaccine.

Questions

Q1. Can a Roman Catholic receive the vaccination?

A. Yes, the Vatican has decreed that a Catholic can in good conscience not only receive the vaccine to protect their own lives, but are morally obliged to receive it in an effort to protect the life of others.

Q2. Does the vaccine contain human or animal tissues?

A. The vaccines themselves do not contain human or animal tissues. The Astra Zeneca vaccine was developed from historic aborted human foetus stem-cells but the Vatican has stated that as these were historic and due to the gravity of the pandemic, no sin is committed in receiving the vaccine.

Q3. Can I refuse the Astra Zeneca vaccine?

A. Catholics may in good conscience receive any of these vaccines for the good of others and themselves. In good conscience, one may refuse a particular vaccine, but they will continue to have a duty to protect others from infection.

Q4. Does the vaccine contain the COVID-19 virus?

A. The vaccine does not contain the COVID-19 virus. It contains only harmless elements from it.

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Sikh

Sikhism – (Sikhi)

Background

There is no faith reason or anything written in Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Scriptures, which would mean that someone from the Sikh religion should be reluctant to have a vaccination.

Questions

Q1. Are there any reasons why Sikhs should not be vaccinated against COVID-19?

A. Religiously there is no reason not to be vaccinated. Please do so if you are clinically able to after talking to your doctor.

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