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# AstraZeneca and Pfizer jabs linked with new side effect – but getting Covid still worse

BOTH the AstraZeneca and the Pfizer vaccines have been linked to rare, but potentially serious, new side effects - but experts say not getting the jab is still more dangerous.

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It comes after researchers from the University of Oxford analysed the healthcare records of more than 32 million people in England. They found that Guillain-Barre syndrome, Bell's palsy and haemorrhage stroke were all linked to both infection and vaccination. But there is no reason that should put you off getting your jab, according to the experts.

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The added that, while a first dose of the AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccine can lead to the development of an adverse neurological event shortly after administration, infection from COVID-19 carries a far greater risk.

The study, published in Nature Medicine, estimates that there were 38 excess cases of Guillain-Barre syndrome per 10 million people given the AstraZeneca vaccine, compared to 145 cases per 10 million after testing positive for Covid-19.

Dr Lahiru Handunnetthi, a co-author of the study, said: "In our study of over 32 million people, we found that several neurological complications such as Guillain-Barre syndrome were linked to both Covid-19 infection and first dose vaccination.

"These neurological complications were very rare, but awareness of these will be important for patient care during mass vaccination programmes across the world."

The vaccines have been linked with new side effects (Image: GETTY)

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Both Pfizer and AstraZeneca have been associated (Image: GETTY)

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Professor Aziz Sheikh, from the University of Edinburgh, said: "These are very rare adverse events. They're so rare that we're having to report them per million of the population.

"It's not what you'd normally see, where it's per 1, 000 people exposed."

They also found an association between the Pfizer jab and haemorrhagic stroke, though experts not involved in the study have questioned the finding due to the weakness of data.

Peter Openshaw, a professor of experimental medicine at Imperial College London, said: "This was only seen in one cohort, it wasn't also found in the Scottish data, and it looks to me a very small signal and possibly not very significant."

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Britons have been urged to continue getting their jabs (Image: GETTY)

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He added that adverse events linked to both the Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines “were dwarfed by the neurological disorders seen after testing positive for Covid”.

Prof Openshaw said: “The neurological complications of Sars-CoV-2 vaccines are much rarer than the neurological complications of Covid-19, showing the vital importance of getting vaccinated.”

The work is the largest investigation into potential side effects so far, using data from the UK vaccine programme.

It involved comparing occurrences of the conditions in the same people prior to vaccination with occurrences after.

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To check the findings, the scientists looked first at English data then checked it with that from Scotland.

Prof Sheikh added: "The risks are orders of magnitude higher if people get infected.

"“There are risks clearly associated with the vaccines, but there are more substantive risks associated with getting the infection.”

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