

- Vaccination / Virus

Will the vaccine give long-term immunity against Covid-19?

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There has been growing evidence that most people who got the mRNA vaccine — like Moderna and Pfizer-biontech — may not need boosters, as long as the virus and its variants do not mutate beyond its current form, scientists have reported recently. On Sunday, the UAE'S Ministry of Health and Prevention (Mohap) announced the approval of the emergency registration of Moderna's Covid-19 vaccine. Prior to the approval, strict assessment and clinical trials have been conducted.

Published in the Nature journal, the study on mRNA vaccines showed that Pfizer-biontech and Moderna jabs set off a persistent immune reaction in the human body that may protect against Covid-19 for years.

The research also found that people who recovered from Covid-19 before being vaccinated may not require the booster dose, even if the virus undergoes significant transformation. However, it remains unclear whether vaccinations alone will have long-lasting effects against the raging contagion.

UAE doctors have said that while the study results are promising, there needs to be more research to conclusively state that mRNA vaccines will be the long-term solution against Covid-19.

Dr Tholfkar Al Baarj, chief clinical officer at Al Futtaim Healthcare, said: "Moderna's vaccine, similar to the Pfizer-biontech shot, uses mRNA technology and contains genetic instructions for the cells to make the coronavirus' spike protein.

"The study reinforces a previous finding, which was first reported in May stating that people who have both recovered from and have been fully inoculated with one of the mRNA vaccines have an even more robust immune response."

He added: "The study also showed that the vaccines produced high levels of neutralising antibodies that were effective against three variants of Covid-19, including the Beta variant."

Dr Srinivasa Rao Polumuru, internal medicine specialist at the NMC Specialty Hospital in Al Nahda, Dubai, said the research findings may mean "that booster shots for the mRNA coronavirus vaccines may not be needed anytime soon".

He said: "Germinal centres in the human body are the key to a persistent, protective immune response. Researchers found that these germinal centres in participants' lymph nodes were highly active nearly four months after the first dose of vaccine, suggesting that fully vaccinated people could have long-term protection."

Dr Abhilash Ramachandran Nair, internal medicine specialist at Aster Hospital, Al Qusais, Dubai, added: "The study was able to identify high levels of germinal center B cells in the lymph nodes in individuals who received full doses of these mRNA vaccines. Significant numbers of germinal center B cells were found in the lymph nodes of these individuals for up to 12 weeks after receiving the second dose of vaccination.

"Though this development is good news, it doesn't say for how long the immunity effect from the vaccine will be present." —