

- Vaccination**HSA: Avoid strenuous activity after 1st or 2nd dose of jab**

The Straits Times · 6 Jul 2021 · A1 · Timothy Goh

People should avoid strenuous physical activity for a week after receiving their first or second mRNA Covid-19 vaccine doses, the expert committee on Covid-19 vaccination and the Health Sciences Authority (HSA) said yesterday.

Those who receive their jabs should seek medical attention promptly if they develop chest pain, shortness of breath or an abnormal heartbeat.

All doctors should pay particular attention to patients showing such signs and symptoms after vaccination, said the committee in a statement.

This was an update to a previous recommendation, on June 11, for only those who had received their second dose of an mRNA vaccine to avoid strenuous physical activity for a week after the jab.

The Ministry of Health said the latest review took place independently of a recent incident involving a 16-year-old who had a heart attack following a weightlifting session six days after his first jab.

The committee said that as at last Wednesday, HSA had received 12 reports of myocarditis and pericarditis occurring in people after they had been inoculated with mRNA Covid-19 vaccines.

Pericarditis is the inflammation of tissue surrounding the heart, while myocarditis is the inflammation of the heart muscle.

Five of the cases occurred in adults who were 30 years old and above. Seven of the cases involved males below the age of 30, which the committee noted is higher than expected for this age group, based on background incidence rates.

HSA said in a separate statement that while half of the cases reported had occurred after the second vaccine dose, it had received six reports of cases that occurred after the first dose.

“All the cases in the younger age group responded well to treatment and had recovered or were discharged well from hospital.”

But the committee cautioned that myocarditis may be aggravated by factors or strenuous activities that may affect the heart.

It said that anyone diagnosed with myocarditis after receiving an mRNA Covid-19 shot should not receive further doses of such vaccines.

However, the committee said that after extensive deliberation, it had decided to continue recommending that all eligible people be vaccinated with mRNA Covid-19 vaccines, “as the protective benefits from the mRNA Covid-19 vaccines continue to outweigh the risks of vaccination”.

“Despite low Covid-19 cases currently, explosive outbreaks with highly transmissible new variants are unpredictable, as shown in our recent experience with the Delta variant and similar experiences overseas.

“Vaccination is thus important to protect all individuals from Covid-19, even for young persons,” said the committee, adding that it will continue to monitor data from around the

world and ensure its recommendations are up to date.

HSA's statement also contained a summary of its latest findings on suspected adverse events following Covid-19 vaccination.

Of the 5,470,425 doses of mRNA vaccines that had been administered here as at last Wednesday, 6,606 suspected adverse events were reported, said HSA. Of these, 252 were classified as suspected serious adverse events.

For teens aged 12 to 18, 129 adverse event reports associated with the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine had been received.

It said that for those in this age group, the most commonly reported events were rashes, hives, shortness of breath, dizziness, light-headedness and syncope.

Syncope, which refers to fainting and temporary loss of consciousness, is not uncommon with vaccination, particularly in this age group, said HSA.

It received 17 reports of syncope among those aged 12 to 18.

The authority said this is generally triggered by anxiety and fear of pain during the vaccination process rather than by the vaccine, and that most of the individuals recovered after five minutes.

It added that the local incidence rate for syncope in this age group – about 7.4 per 100,000 doses – is similar to that in overseas reports.

“Safeguards have been implemented to mitigate this risk. Those who are anxious or have needle phobia can be vaccinated while lying down,” said HSA.

It also noted that rare instances of anaphylaxis – a severe lifethreatening allergic reaction – have been linked to the vaccines, but said that the incidence rate of this here has been similar to the rates reported overseas.

HSA said: “Overall, based on the data to date, the benefits of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna Covid-19 vaccines continue to outweigh the known risks in a pandemic. HSA will continue to actively monitor the safety profile of the Covid-19 vaccines and relevant regulatory actions will be taken to safeguard public health when warranted.”