

Norway, Sweden to wait before using AZ vaccine again

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Norway and Sweden said Thursday they would wait before resuming use of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine even though it has been declared safe by Europe's medical regulator.

The European Medicines Agency's (EMA) said that after an investigation the AstraZeneca vaccine was "safe and effective" and not linked to an increased risk of blood clots.

The ruling, which was similar to the World Health Organization's ruling, led to European heavyweights Germany, France, Spain and Italy all saying they would soon resume vaccinations with the jab.

The Norwegian Institute of Public Health said it "took note" of the EMA's finding, but deemed it "premature" at this point to come to a final conclusion.

The NIPH said it would issue its own guidance at the end of next week.

"Vaccinations with AstraZeneca will remain suspended until we have a full view of the situation," institute director Camilla Stoltenberg told the media.

Neighbouring Sweden also said it would maintain its suspension of the vaccine.

AstraZeneca is a British-Swedish pharmaceutical company, based in Britain.

"We are going to examine the information contained in the (EMA) study and we hope that we will be in a position next week to decide on the best way to use this vaccine in the future," epidemiologist Anders Tegnell said.

Swedish authorities say one person died after being inoculated with the AstraZeneca vaccine, but did not link the death directly to it.

"There was a blot clot in arteries and veins with heavy bleeding," the

Swedish medical products agency Lakemedelsverket said.

Earlier Thursday, a Norwegian medical team claimed it found a link between the AstraZeneca vaccine and blood clots in patients who became seriously ill or died a few days after their first injection.

"We obtained results that could explain the clinical evolution of our hospitalised patients," said Paal Andre Holme, a director of the national hospital in Oslo.

"These results support our theory... that these patients had a strong immune response which led to the formation of antibodies that could affect the (blood) platelets and lead to a thrombus" or blood clot, he added.

Asked if the death was caused by the vaccine, he replied: "I don't see any other possibility at this point," while emphasising that it was still a question of "indicators".

Norwegian media said the results were recent and had not been taken into consideration by the EMA.

The European agency's safety committee concluded that the [vaccine](#) was "not associated with an increase in the overall risk of thromboembolic events or [blood clots](#)", according to EMA chief Emer Cooke.

She nonetheless declined to "rule out definitively" a link to a rare clotting disorder.

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