

Covishield Cause Side Effects

Why In News

- **AstraZeneca**, in a significant turn, has admitted for the first time in court documents that its Covid-19 vaccine may lead to a rare side effect. British pharma giant AstraZeneca has admitted that its Covid vaccine can cause rare side effects. **Covishield can cause, in rare cases**, a condition that leads to blood clots and low platelet count, the vaccine-maker has said in court documents.



- **Oxford–AstraZeneca Covid vaccine** was sold globally under the brand names Covishield and Vaxzevria among others.
- The pharmaceutical company **faces a class-action lawsuit alleging** serious injuries and deaths resulting from its vaccine, developed in collaboration with the University of Oxford.
- In India, the same vaccine, called **Covishield and manufactured** by the Pune-based Serum Institute, has been administered through 175 crore doses. Understandably, this raises questions as to the safety of the jab all of us took.

All You Need To Know

- AstraZeneca is facing a **class action lawsuit** in the UK over claims that its vaccine caused deaths and severe injuries in several cases. Victims in as many as **51 cases in the UK High Court** are seeking damages up to **100 million pounds**. The

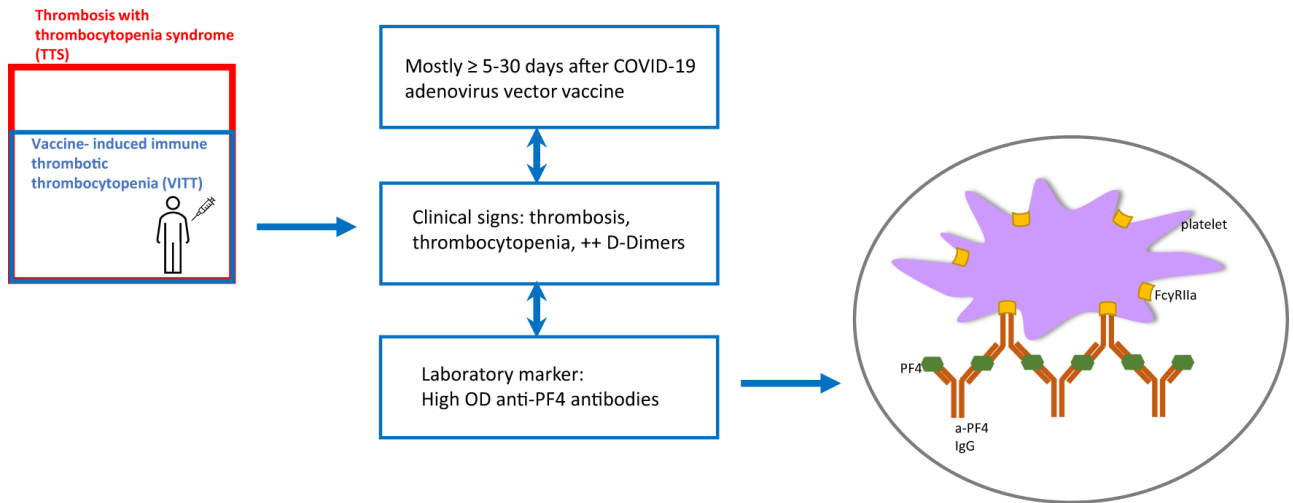
UK government, which has secured AstraZeneca from legal action, is yet to intervene in the matter.



- **Jamie Scott, the first complainant** in the case, had alleged that he had received the vaccine in April 2021 which caused him a permanent brain injury after a blood clot. This has prevented him from working and the hospital even told his wife thrice that he's going to die, he claimed.



- AstraZeneca has contested the claims, but admitted in one of the court documents in February that Covishield can "in very rare cases, cause TTS", the report said.
- **TTS (Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome)** causes blood clots and a low blood platelet count in humans.



- "It is admitted that the AZ vaccine can, in very rare cases, cause TTS. The causal mechanism is not known. Further, TTS can also occur in the absence of the AZ vaccine (or any vaccine). Causation in any individual case will be a matter for expert evidence," AstraZeneca said.

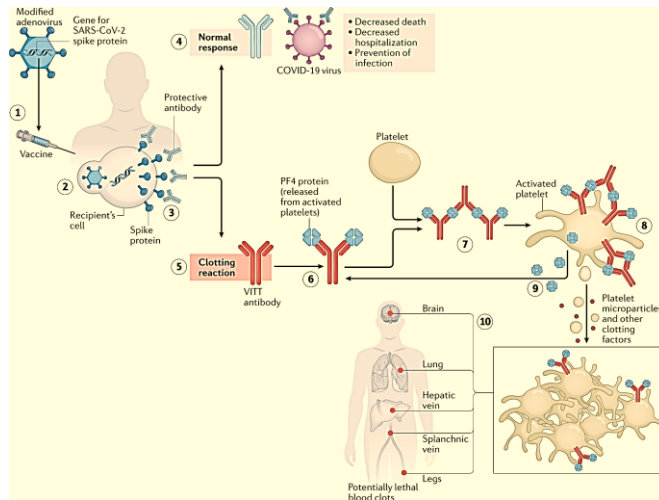
Why Is There No Need To Panic

- **AstraZeneca** made its admission in a legal defence to Scott's claim, which may lead to payouts to the victims and grieving relatives, the report said.
- The latest admission also contradicts the company's 2023 stand, in which it had told the lawyers of Jamie Scott that "we do not accept that TTS is caused by the vaccine at a generic level".



- **AstraZeneca** has, however, denied the lawyers' claims that the vaccine is "defective" and its efficacy "vastly overstated".
- Shortly after the vaccine rollout began in 2021, scientists found a link between Covishield and a new condition called the **vaccine-induced immune**

thrombocytopenia and thrombosis (VITT), which the lawyers claim are a subset of TTS. AstraZeneca does not appear to recognise the claim, the report added.



Why Is There No Need To Panic

- Experts say that **TTS was reported** early on in the pandemic by European countries but it was very rare in India. A senior health ministry official, who was part of the discussions on the vaccination drive says, **“TTS is a very rare side effect**, rarer still in Indians and South Asians as compared to Europeans. But there is enough evidence to show that vaccination saved lives — the benefits outweighed the risks.”



- Besides, the **risk is not only rare** but is high only in the first few weeks after the first vaccination. Most Indians have already had three shots and it has been a long time since.
- **Says Dr Gagandeep Kang, Director of Global Health** at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, who was on the WHO safety advisory committee for COVID-

19 vaccines, “It is most important to reassure people that the risk of TTS is shortly after vaccination. We are all long past vaccination now,” she adds.



- “It is surprising that people are reacting now. The rare side effect was well **documented and scientifically** accepted even when the vaccination drives were going on. The benefit of vaccination at the height of the pandemic outweighed the risk,” says Dr Anurag Agarwal, Dean of Biosciences and Health Research at the Trivedi School of Biosciences of Ashoka University.
- A 2022 study in Lancet Global Health found that AstraZeneca had reported rates of **8.1 TTS cases per million** receiving the first dose and **2.3 TTS cases per million** receiving the second dose. The study also showed that there was a geographic variation in the reporting of TTS, with the **highest cases coming from Nordic countries** (17.6 per million doses) and the lowest from Asian countries (0.2 per million doses).