



Group immunity still far away: 'Vaccine must really be the salvation'

VIDEO | About 5.5 percent of Dutch blood donors have developed antibodies against the coronavirus. That's a "modest increase" from the 3 percent recorded in April. It can therefore take another two years before group immunity is achieved in the Netherlands.

Marcia Nieuwenhuis Jun 3 2020 Last update: 09:50

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This is evident from the figures from the second round of the large-scale research into group immunity in the Netherlands that this site requested from the blood banks of Sanquin. 7,000 blood donors were tested for this in the period from 10 to 20 May. The virus was then around 12 weeks after the first official corona infection in the Netherlands.



▲ Of the blood donors that have been tested for antibodies, only 5.5 percent appear to have built up immunity, tests from Sanquin's blood banks show. © ANP XTRA

60 percent



▲ Minister Hugo de Jonge (black tie) and special coronation emissary Feike Sijbesma (beige tie) are given a tour at Sanquin. © ANP

The first large national group immunity study found that [about 3 percent of blood donors had antibodies in the blood](#) . With these [large population surveys it](#) should become clear whether a large group is already resistant to the virus in the Netherlands. With corona, if just over [60 percent of this disease is cured](#) , the virus can make victims much more difficult. People are then surrounded with immune persons in such a way that the outbreak goes out.

Sanquin research leader Hans Zaaijer calls the increase found 'relatively small'. „ This is in line with the data that the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) shows about the declining spread of the infection in the Netherlands. The lockdown measures are effective, reducing the number of people infected. "

This means, according to the medical microbiologist, who is also a professor at the University of Amsterdam, that 'a vaccine should really be the salvation and not let corona be dosed to society'. "It may take another two years before group immunity is reached in the Netherlands. You just need a vaccine. "

What is meant by group immunity?



Blood donors between the ages of 18 and 75 who had been free of symptoms for at least two weeks were tested for this study. Because only donors are examined, the percentage found is not entirely representative of the Dutch population. From June, Sanquin will contribute to the national Pienter Corona study, in which RIVM will also involve young people and the elderly.

According to physician microbiologist and professor Hans Zaaijer of the Dutch blood banks of Sanquin blood supply, the coronavirus may become part of life. "In the sneak season it is then: do you have the flu or do you have corona?" Read the entire interview below.

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How do you explain the modest rise in blood donors that have built up antibodies?

„ The increase is relatively small: from 3 to 5.5 percent. This is in line with the data that the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) shows about the declining spread of the infection in the Netherlands. The lockdown measures are effective, so fewer people have been infected. I suspect that the majority who joined it is the tail end of the corona outbreak when it was really hit. "

If you compare this to the thousands of deaths that have occurred, 5.5 percent is not very much?

"A majority in our research team had also bet on 5 percent. So it is in line with expectations. I think it is a nice outcome. Suppose the percentage had been very high, we would not have done that lockdown properly. The intensive care units are out of trouble and hardly any people are admitted with corona. "

Does this mean that building group immunity by letting the virus take its course is not a solution and that a vaccine should be introduced?

"Exactly! This modest increase shows that a vaccine really should be the salvation and not make it corona dosed. Getting the virus over the population is not an option. If it goes from 3 to 5.5 percent in six weeks and continues at this rate, it may take another 130 weeks to get to 60 percent. It may take another two years before group immunity is reached in the Netherlands. You just need a vaccine. "





▲ Hans Zaaijer expects people who have had corona to remain immune for six months. © Marco Okhuizen

Why does the coronavirus only extinguish when 60 percent have antibodies?

“One infected person who has the coronavirus infects between two to three others on average. That is the characteristic of the animal. With measles, for example, the figure is much higher with twelve people. So with corona, if just over 60 percent of corona is cured, the virus is much more difficult to catch a victim. People are then surrounded with immune people in such a way that the outbreak goes out. If a rod in the subway is only grabbed by immune people after a corona patient, the virus has not found any new victims and it goes out. ”

What if things go wrong?

„ Suppose we are very unlucky: there will not be a good vaccine and we will not find a powerful virus inhibitor with which you can properly treat corona, then this will be, as it were, a bad flu, which we get every year. Tuberculosis was included a century ago. Without a vaccine, it may be that this coronavirus becomes part of life. In the quick season it is then: do you have the flu or do you have corona? ”

Is it true that about 900,000 people have gone through corona and 1 percent of them die?

“That was not the focus of this study. For this study, we looked at how often antibodies occur in blood donors between the ages of 18 and 75 who were free of symptoms for at least two weeks. So we did not test children and not very old people. From June, Sanquin will contribute to the Pienter Corona study led by RIVM. It also measures the young and the elderly and we can say more about that. ”

Will the people who had corona remain immune?

“A reasonable number of donors were included in both measurements. In the great majority, the antibodies in the blood do not disappear and a beautifully high signal remains. The antibodies drop at just 10 percent. This supports the expectation that you will remain immune for a while. I am an optimist and hope you will remain immune for at least six months. ”

So now there is a heavy burden on the vaccine makers?


„ That's right, but also for citizens like you and me, because the non-vulnerable do it for the vulnerable. Do people want that? Are you going to save me? I'm 64. Can you do this temporarily or for the rest of your life? I also hope that it will go well for a while during the summer. Corona is struggling with a lot of sunlight and dry air. Then we have a good time before we have to put our hats together in the fall. ”

Watch our videos about the corona crisis below:




Groepsimmuniteit lijkt nog ver weg

Groepsimmuniteit lijkt nog ver weg. Ongeveer 5,5 procent van de Nederlandse bloeddonors heeft antistoffen tegen het coronavirus ontwikkeld. Dat is een 'bescheiden stijging' ten opzichte van de 3 procent gemeten in april. Dat blijkt uit nieuwe cijfers over het eerste




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