

Covid-19 Vaccination Programme

The NHS has started the delivery of a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccination programme. The programme started in Berkshire West on 15 December 2020 and is expanding as more vaccine supplies are available.

Following extensive safety trials and authorisation by the independent regulator (the MHRA), effective COVID-19 vaccines are now available for free in the UK.

Vaccines approved to date for use in the UK:

- Pfizer/BioNTech (Germany) vaccine: approved 2 December 2020
- Oxford University and AstraZeneca (UK) vaccine: approved 30 December 2020
- Moderna vaccine (US): approved 8 January 2021

We understand lots of people are very eager to get protected but please don't contact your GP practices, the wider NHS or any of the community venues that are hosting clinics to seek a vaccine. Please be assured the NHS will contact you when it's your turn.

- When you are contacted you, please attend your booked appointments
- Please continue to follow all the rules to control the virus and save lives

Frequently asked questions

How will patients get the vaccine?

Groups of GP practices (known as Primary Care Networks) are working together to vaccinate patients, so you might not be contacted by your usual practice, and you might need to go to a different location for the vaccination itself. You will be told where to attend when you are invited

You might know others who have been invited for their vaccination already, but that doesn't mean that you are a lower priority or have been missed.

Many more people will be invited over the next few weeks. We are at the start of the biggest vaccination programme in NHS history and it will take time to work through everyone.

How will patients be contacted?

- When it is the right time people will receive an invitation to come forward.
- Networks of local GP practices are working together and using the usual range of communications methods (calls, text messages, letters) available to them to make contact with patients.

I am in one of the listed priority groups, why do I have to wait?

- Covid-19 vaccines will become available as they are approved for use and as each batch is manufactured. So every dose is needed to protect those at

highest risk. You will be called in as soon as there is enough vaccine available.

- Some people who are housebound or live in a care home and who can't get to a local vaccination centre may have to wait for supply of the right type of vaccine. This is because only some vaccines can be transported between people's homes.

I've called my GP practice about the vaccination but they say they don't know anything, why?

- Single GP practices don't have the capacity to roll out a programme like this alone. That is why they have come together to pool resources and work with other partners in the community to get the clinics up and running quickly. As a result, individual practices are still managing all their usual day-to-day business and may not have answers to your questions about vaccinations. That is why we are asking people to wait to be contacted by the specific teams who are concentrating on the vaccination programme.

How are you choosing who to vaccinate?

- Patients are being prioritised for the vaccine according to the national prioritisation criteria below. More information about the prioritisation criteria is [available here](#).
 - Residents in a care home for older adults and their carers
 - All those 80 years of age and over and frontline health and social care workers
 - All those 75 years of age and over
 - All those 70 years of age and over and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals
 - All those 65 years of age and over
 - All individuals aged 16 years to 64 years with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality
 - All those 60 years of age and over
 - All those 55 years of age and over
 - All those 50 years of age and over

Where are the clinics delivering vaccinations?

- Vaccines will be offered in a range of community settings. Some teams will visit people to offer the vaccine, for example in care homes, other people may have to go to the nearest centre. Because some of the vaccine has to be stored in a very low temperature freezer, it is not possible to deliver it from all GP practices.

What if the centre I am offered is not easy to get to?

- Please try to attend the vaccination centre you are offered. If you cannot attend that centre, you may have to wait to get the vaccine. More clinics will open in the coming weeks and months.

Should I still go to my vaccination appointment in lockdown?

- Leaving the house for medical reasons, including a Covid-19 vaccination appointment, is allowed in all local restriction Tiers. So if you are contacted by the NHS to book a vaccination appointment, it's crucial that you attend. Each service is carefully planned with strict safety measure in place.

Is the NHS confident the vaccine is safe?

- Yes. The NHS will not offer any Covid-19 vaccinations to the public until experts have signed off that it is safe to do so. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), the official UK regulator, have said these vaccines are very safe and highly effective.

How long will my vaccination take?

- While the injection can be given very quickly, all patients must wait on site for 15 minutes afterwards to check they do not experience a severe reaction.
- Patients are also urged not to arrive too early, to avoid queuing outside for too long.

Do the vaccines contain animal products?

- No, there are none in any of the three vaccines approved for use in the UK.

Why is it important to get your COVID-19 vaccination?

- Getting your COVID-19 vaccination as soon as you can, should protect you and may help to protect your family and those you care for.
- The COVID-19 vaccine should help reduce the rates of serious illness and save lives and will therefore reduce pressure on the NHS and social care services.

I'm currently ill with COVID-19, can I get the vaccine?

- People currently unwell and experiencing COVID-19 symptoms should not receive the COVID-19 vaccine until they have recovered.

Do people who have already had COVID-19 get vaccinated?

- Yes, they should get vaccinated. There is no evidence of any safety concerns from vaccinating individuals with a past history of COVID-19 infection, or with detectable COVID-19 antibody.

Are there any known or anticipated side effects?

- Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. Most of these are mild and short-term, and not everyone gets them. Even if you do have symptoms after the first dose, you still need to have the second dose. You may not be protected until at least seven days after your second dose of the vaccine.
- Very common side effects include:

- Having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection. This tends to be worst around 1-2 days after the vaccine
- Feeling tired
- Headache
- General aches, or mild flu like symptoms

I have had my flu vaccine, do I need the COVID-19 vaccine as well?

- The flu vaccine does not protect you from COVID-19. As you are eligible for both vaccines you should have them both, but separated by at least seven days.

Will the COVID-19 vaccine protect me from flu?

- No, the COVID-19 vaccine will not protect you against the flu. If you have been offered a flu vaccine, please try to have this as soon as possible to help protect you, your family and patients from flu this winter.