



What you need to know about the COVID-19 vaccines

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- The coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccines are safe and effective. They will give you the best protection against coronavirus
- The vaccines are part of our defence – we need to continue with hands, face, space
- The NHS will let you know when it is your turn to have a vaccine. It is important not to contact the NHS for a vaccination before then.

1. Who will get it when

- An independent group of experts has recommended that the NHS first offers vaccines to those at highest risk of catching the disease and of suffering serious complications or dying from COVID-19. The phased vaccination programme will see people aged 80 and above among the first to receive the life-saving jab.
- When it is the right time for you to receive your vaccination, you will receive an invitation to come forward. This may be via the phone, or through a letter either from your GP or the national booking system.
- We know lots of people will be eager to get protected but we are asking people not to contact us to get an appointment as you will not be able to get one until you are contacted.

2. How will I know when I can get a vaccine?

- When it is the right time people will receive an invitation to come forward. For most people this will be a letter, either from their GP or the national NHS.

This letter will include all the information you will need to book appointments, including your NHS number. Please do not contact the NHS to get an appointment until you get this letter.

- Information on the vaccine is available on the NHS.UK website.

3. Where the jabs will be administered

- Since 8 December over 500 local vaccination services and nearly 80 hospital hubs have launched what is the largest vaccination programme in the history of the NHS - at the same time as the whole of the health service has been dealing with the intensifying Covid pressures.

- Over the coming weeks we will continue to build capacity across the system to offer more vaccinations with additional local vaccination services, hospital and vaccination centres coming on-line.

4. What vaccines are currently available?

- Both the Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines are now available. Both vaccines have been shown to be safe and offer high levels of protection and have been given regulatory approval by the MHRA.
- The Government has in principle secured access to seven different vaccine candidates, across four different vaccine types, totalling over 357 million doses. This includes:
 - 40 million doses of the BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine
 - 100m doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine.
 - 7 million doses of the Moderna vaccine, which is also being assessed by the MHRA.

5. Is the NHS confident the vaccines are safe?

- Yes. The NHS will not offer any Covid-19 vaccinations to the public until independent experts have signed off that it is safe to do so.
- The MHRA, the official UK regulator, have said that both of these vaccines have good safety profiles and offer a high level of protection, and we have full confidence in their expert judgement and processes.
- As with any medicine, vaccines are highly regulated products.
- There are checks at every stage in the development and manufacturing process, and continued monitoring once it has been authorised and is being used in the wider population.

7. How effective are the vaccines? How long do they take to work?

- The MHRA have said these vaccines are highly effective, but to get full protection people need to come back for the second dose – this is really important.
- To ensure as many people are vaccinated as quickly as possible, the Department for Health and Social Care now advise that the second dose of both the OxfordAstraZeneca and the Pfizer/BioNtech vaccine should be scheduled up to 12 weeks apart.
- Full protection kicks in around a week or two after that second dose, which is why it's also important that when you do get invited, you act on that and get yourself booked in as soon as possible. Even those who have received a vaccine still need to follow social distancing and other guidance.

8. What happens if a person has the first jab but not the second?

- Both vaccines have been authorised on the basis of two doses because the evidence from the clinical trials shows that this gives the maximum level of protection.
- To ensure as many people are vaccinated as quickly as possible, the Department for Health and Social Care now advise that the second dose of both the Oxford/AstraZeneca and the Pfizer/BioNtech vaccine should be scheduled up to 12 weeks apart.
- The evidence doesn't show any risk to not having the second dose other than not being as protected as you otherwise would be. We would urge everyone to show up for both of their appointments for their own protection as well as to ensure we don't waste vaccines or the time of NHS staff.

9. What about the Moderna vaccine? Why is this available in the USA but not here?

- The NHS will only deploy vaccines which the MHRA decide – after extensive assessment – are safe and effective. The MHRA's assessment of the Moderna vaccine is ongoing. The Government have provisionally ordered several million doses of this vaccine if it is approved, but we do not expect Moderna to be able to make these available until Spring 2021.

10. Can people pick what vaccine they want?

- Any vaccines that the NHS will provide will have been approved because they pass the MHRA's tests on safety and efficacy, so people should be assured that whatever vaccine they get, it is worth their while.

11. Will you use the Oxford vaccine more because it's cheaper and easier to store?

- The vaccines that the NHS uses and in what circumstances will be decided by the MHRA. The results that we have seen for all the vaccines so far have been very encouraging and if borne out by the final assessment each of them would be classed as being very effective.

12. Does the vaccine include any parts from foetal or animal origin?

- There is no material of foetal or animal origin in either vaccine. All ingredients are published in healthcare information on the MHRA's website.
- For the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine information is available here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-approval-of-pfizer-biontech-vaccine-for-covid-19>
- For the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine information is available here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-approval-of-covid-19-vaccine-astrazeneca>

13. COVID-19 vaccine side effects

- These are important details which the MHRA always consider when assessing candidate vaccines for use.
- For these vaccines, like lots of others, they have identified that some people might feel slightly unwell, but they report that no significant side effects have been observed in the tens of thousands of people involved in trials.
- All patients will be provided with information on the vaccine they have received, how to look out for any side effects, and what to do if they do occur, including reporting them to the MHRA.
- More information on possible side effects can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/>

14. 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 in a more convenient location.

15. Can I pay for a COVID-19 vaccine privately or at a pharmacy?

- No, the COVID-19 vaccination is only available through the NHS to eligible groups and it is a free vaccination

16. Is it mandatory?

- There are no plans for a COVID-19 vaccine to be compulsory.

17. Why do I have to wait?

- The 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.
- The NHS will let you know when it is your turn to have the vaccine.
- 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 to people's homes.

18. Advice if you are of childbearing age, pregnant or breastfeeding

- The MHRA have updated their guidance to say that pregnant women and those who are breastfeeding can have the vaccine but should discuss it with a clinician to ensure that the benefits outweigh any potential risks.