

COVID-19 vaccination

- A guide for adults

This leaflet explains about the COVID-19 vaccination, who is eligible and who needs to have the vaccine to protect them from Coronavirus.

What is COVID-19 or Coronavirus?

COVID-19 is caused by a new coronavirus, known as SARS-CoV-2. It was first identified in late 2019. It is very infectious and can lead to severe respiratory disease.

Many people who are infected may not have any symptoms or only have mild symptoms. These commonly start with cough, fever, headache and loss of taste or smell.

Some people will feel very tired, have aching muscles, sore throat, diarrhoea and vomiting, fever and confusion. A small number of people then go on to have severe disease, which may require hospitalisation or admission to intensive care.

Overall less than 1 in 100 people who are infected will die from COVID-19, but this is closer to 1 in 10 of those over 75 years of age. There is no cure for COVID-19 although some newly tested treatments do help to reduce the risk of complications.

Which vaccine will I get?

In the UK, there are two types of COVID-19 vaccine currently being offered first (made by Pfizer BioNTech and AstraZeneca). They both require two separate doses to provide the best longer-term protection.

Each vaccine was tested in over 20,000 people in several different countries and shown to be safe and effective. You will be given one of these vaccines depending on which one is available. These vaccines will not have a full UK marketing authorisation (license) yet but will have been authorised by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) based on a full assessment of their safety and effectiveness.

Who should have a COVID-19 vaccine?

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), an independent expert group, has recommended that the NHS offers these vaccines first to those at highest risk of catching the infection and of suffering serious complications.

This includes older adults, frontline health and social care workers and those with certain clinical conditions. When more vaccine becomes available, the vaccines will be offered to other people at risk as soon as possible.

Coronavirus can affect anyone. If you are an older adult and have a long-term health condition, COVID-19 can be very serious and in some cases fatal.

You should have the COVID-19 vaccine among the first groups offered if you are:

- a person living or working in a care home for older adults
- a frontline healthcare worker
- a frontline social care worker
- a domiciliary carer providing personal care
- aged 65 years and over
- in the clinically extremely vulnerable group

Everyone who is in the clinically extremely vulnerable group will be eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine. When you are offered the vaccine may depend on the severity of your condition. Your GP can advise on whether you are eligible.

The vaccine will also be offered to those aged 16 years and over with conditions such as:

- blood cancer (such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma)
- diabetes

- a heart problem
- a chest complaint or breathing difficulties, including bronchitis, emphysema or severe asthma
- kidney disease
- liver disease
- lowered immunity due to disease or treatment (such as HIV infection, steroid medication, chemotherapy or radiotherapy)
- having had an organ transplant
- having had a stroke or a transient ischaemic attack (TIA)
- a neurological or muscle wasting condition including epilepsy and dementia
- severe or profound learning disability
- Down's syndrome
- a problem with your spleen, e.g. sickle cell disease, or having had your spleen removed
- being seriously overweight (BMI of 40 and above)
- severe mental illness

Some of the people in these groups maybe clinically extremely vulnerable and maybe offered vaccine earlier as part of that group.

At the same time as those aged 16-64 years with long term health conditions the vaccine will also be offered to:

- those adults who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill
- younger adults in long stay nursing and residential settings, and staff

After these groups, those aged 50-64 will be offered vaccination.

When more vaccine becomes available it will be offered to more groups of the population.

I am pregnant, can I have the vaccine?

COVID-19 vaccines have not yet been tested in pregnancy, so until more information is available, those who are pregnant should not routinely have this vaccine.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has recognised that the potential benefits of vaccination are particularly important for some pregnant women. This includes those who are at high risk of catching the infection or those with clinical conditions that put them at very high risk of suffering serious complications from COVID-19. In these circumstances, you should discuss vaccination with your doctor or nurse, and you may feel that it is better to go ahead and receive the vaccine.

If you are pregnant, you should not be vaccinated unless you are at high risk. You can be vaccinated after your pregnancy is over. If you have had the first dose and then become pregnant, you should delay the second dose until after the pregnancy is over, unless you are at high risk.

There is no advice to avoid pregnancy after having a COVID-19 vaccination.

I am breastfeeding, what should I do?

There are no data on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in those breastfeeding or on the breastfed infant. Even so, COVID-19 vaccines are not thought to be a risk to the breastfed infant, and the benefits of breastfeeding are well known. Because of this, the JCVI has advised that the vaccine can be given whilst breastfeeding. If you are breastfeeding, you may decide to wait until you have finished breastfeeding and then have the vaccination.

Who cannot have the vaccine?

A very small number of people cannot have COVID-19 vaccines. This includes people who have had a severe allergic reaction to any ingredient in the vaccine or to a previous dose of

the same vaccine. Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have ever had a severe allergic reaction, as an alternative vaccine may be available for you.

If you are currently unwell with a fever or have had a positive COVID-19 test in the last 28 days you should book a later appointment.

Will the vaccine protect me?

The COVID-19 vaccination will reduce the chance of you suffering from COVID-19 disease. Studies have shown high levels of short-term protection from two to three weeks after a single dose of vaccine, but a second dose is required for longer-term protection.

The vaccines do not contain living organisms, and so are safe for people with disorders of the immune system. These people may not respond so well to the vaccine.

Like all medicines, no vaccine is 100% effective – some people may still get COVID-19 despite having a vaccination, but this should be less severe.

Will the vaccine have 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.

Very common side effects include:

- having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection for several days after the vaccine
- feeling tired
- headache
- general aches, or mild flu like symptoms

A mild fever may occur for two to three days after vaccination but a high temperature is unusual and may indicate you have COVID-19 or another infection. You can take the normal dose of paracetamol (follow the advice in the packaging) and rest to help you feel better. Do not exceed the normal dose. An uncommon side effect is swelling of the local glands.

Symptoms following vaccination normally last less than a week. If your symptoms seem to get worse or if you are concerned, look at 111.wales.nhs.uk online, and if necessary call NHS 111 Wales on 111 or your GP surgery. If 111 is not available in your area, call 0845 46 47. Calls to NHS 111 Wales are free from landlines and mobiles. Calls to 0845 46 47 cost 2p per minute plus your telephone provider's usual access charge.

If you do seek advice from a doctor or nurse, make sure you tell them about your vaccination (show them your vaccination card if possible) so that they can assess you properly. You can also report suspected side effects to vaccines and medicines through the Yellow Card scheme.

Rarely, some people have an allergic reaction soon after a vaccination. This may be a rash or itching affecting part or all of the body. Even more rarely, some people can have a severe reaction soon after vaccination, which causes breathing difficulties and may cause them to collapse. This is called anaphylaxis and can happen with other medicines and food. These reactions are rare and nurses are trained to manage them. People who have an anaphylactic reaction can be successfully treated and usually recover within a few hours.

Can I catch COVID-19 from the vaccine?

You cannot catch COVID-19 from the vaccine. But it is possible to have caught COVID-19 and not realise you have the symptoms until after being vaccinated.

The most important symptoms of COVID-19 are recent onset of any of the following:

- a new continuous cough
- a high temperature
- a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell
- some people also have a sore throat, headache, nasal congestion, diarrhoea, nausea and vomiting

If you have any of the symptoms above, stay at home and arrange to have a test. If you need more information on symptoms visit 111.wales.nhs.uk/.

What should I do next?

After you have had the first dose, you need to plan to attend your second appointment.

It is important to have both doses of the vaccine to give you the best longer-term protection. Keep your card safe and make sure you attend your next appointment to get your second dose.

What should I do if I am unwell on the appointment day?

If you are acutely unwell with a fever, call to cancel and wait until you have recovered to have the vaccine. You should not attend a vaccine appointment if you are self-isolating or waiting for a COVID-19 test or result.

Can I give COVID-19 to anyone, after I have had the vaccine?

The vaccine will reduce your chance of becoming seriously ill. We do not know yet whether it will stop you from catching and passing on the virus. So, it is important you continue to follow the COVID-19 guidance to protect those around you.

To protect yourself and your family, friends and colleagues you still need to:

- practice social distancing
- wear a face mask
- wash your hands carefully and frequently
- follow the current guidance: gov.wales/coronavirus

Remember COVID-19 is spread through droplets breathed out from the nose or mouth, particularly when speaking or coughing. It can also be picked up by touching your eyes, nose and mouth after contact with contaminated objects and surfaces

More information:

- You can find out more information about COVID-19 vaccines, including their contents and possible side effects at [111.wales.nhs.uk/coronavirus\(2019ncov\)](https://111.wales.nhs.uk/coronavirus(2019ncov)) and www.gov.uk/government/collections/mhra-guidance-on-coronavirus-covid-19
- You can report suspected side effects online at: coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/ or via the Yellow Card app.
- To find out how the NHS uses your information, visit 111.wales.nhs.uk/lifestylewellbeing/yourinfoyourrights
- To order more copies of this leaflet visit <https://phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/health-information-resources/>

© Public Health Wales, January 2021

(with acknowledgement to Public Health England)