



What you need to know about the Covid-19 vaccines

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- The coronavirus (Covid-19) vaccines are safe, effective and will save lives. They will give you the best protection against coronavirus.
- If you're 18 or over, or if you turn 18 before 1 July 2021, a carer or have an underlying health condition, book your Covid-19 vaccination appointment at www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination, call 119 or speak to your GP.
- If you are eligible for a vaccine, you can also visit one of our walk-in vaccination clinics, just bring proof of age or your work identification if you are a health or social care professional. [Details are available here.](#)
- It is never too late to get the Covid-19 vaccine—if you have any concerns, speak to your GP or a healthcare professional. You can also visit one of our walk-in vaccination clinics and talk to the staff about your options.

Who will get it when

- The NHS is currently offering the Covid-19 vaccine to people most at risk from coronavirus.
- In England, the vaccine is being offered in some hospitals and pharmacies, at local centres run by GPs and at larger vaccination centres. More centres are opening all the time. It is being given to:
 - people aged 18 or over, or if you turn 18 before 1 July 2021
 - people at [high risk from coronavirus](#) (clinically extremely vulnerable)
 - people who live or work in care homes
 - health and social care workers
 - people with a condition that puts them at higher risk (clinically vulnerable)
 - people with a learning disability
 - people who are a main carer for someone at high risk from coronavirus
- [Read the latest JCVI advice on priority groups for the Covid-19 vaccination on GOV.UK](#)
- If you are eligible to get a vaccine, you can book appointments at a larger vaccination centre or pharmacy now by visiting nhs.uk or calling 119, or you can wait to be invited to go to a local NHS service.
- [Statement from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation \(JCVI\) following reports of an extremely rare adverse event after vaccination with the first dose of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.](#)

How will I know when I can get a vaccine?

- When it is the right time people will receive an invitation to come forward or, if you are eligible, you can visit one of our walk-in clinics. More information on walk-ins and temporary pop-up clinics is available here – <https://swlondonccg.nhs.uk/covid/where-can-you-get-vaccinated/vaccination-walk-in-clinics/>

Where the jabs will be administered

- The vaccine is being offered at larger vaccination centres, pharmacies and some local NHS services such as hospitals or GP surgeries.

I am confused about my second dose of the vaccine? Can you explain it this to me?

- People are being offered their second vaccine earlier as part of plans to tackle the spread of the Delta variant, first identified in India.

Who will this affect? How do I rebook my appointment?

- Appointments for a second dose of a vaccine will be brought forward from 12 to 8 weeks for the remaining people who are over 50 or those who are more clinically vulnerable to coronavirus. This is those people in the [top 9 priority groups](#).
- The NHS will contact those who should bring their appointment forward when they are able to do so. Nobody needs to contact the NHS, wait for us to contact you.
- If you get a text message from the National Booking System, please do cancel and rebook your second dose appointment through the website www.nhs.uk or by ringing 119.

Is the NHS confident the vaccines are safe?

- The vaccines approved for use in the UK have met strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness set out by the independent Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).
- Any Covid-19 vaccine that is approved must go through all the clinical trials and safety checks all other licensed medicines go through. The MHRA follows international standards of safety.
- Other vaccines are being developed. They will only be available on the NHS once they have been thoroughly tested to make sure they are safe and effective.
- So far, millions of people have been given a Covid-19 vaccine and reports of serious side effects, such as allergic reactions or clotting problems, have been very rare.
- To find out more about the vaccines approved in the UK, see:
 - [GOV.UK: Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for COVID-19 approved by MHRA](#)
 - [GOV.UK: Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine for COVID-19 approved by MHRA](#)
 - [GOV.UK: Moderna vaccine for COVID-19 approved by MHRA](#)

How long will my vaccine be effective for?

- We expect these vaccines to work for at least a year – if not longer. This will be constantly monitored.

Is it mandatory?

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

Covid-19 vaccine side effects

- Most side effects of the Covid-19 vaccine are mild and should not last longer than a week, such as:
 - a sore arm where the needle went in
 - feeling tired
 - a headache
 - feeling achy
 - feeling or being sick
- You can take painkillers, such as paracetamol, if you need to.
- You may get a high temperature or feel hot or shivery 1 or 2 days after having your vaccination.
- But if you have a high temperature that lasts longer than 2 days, a new, continuous cough or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste you may have Covid-19. Stay at home and get a test.
- If your symptoms get worse or you are worried, call 111.

What is the concern around the Astra Zeneca vaccine, and how does it affect me?

- There have been reports of an extremely rare but serious condition involving blood clots and unusual bleeding after AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccination.
- Some people with this condition have suffered life changing effects and some have died. These cases are being carefully reviewed but the risk factors for this condition are not yet clear.
- Although this condition remains extremely rare there is a higher risk in people after the first dose of the AZ vaccine.
- To date and overall, just over 10 people develop this condition for every million doses of AZ vaccine given. This is seen more often in younger people and tends to occur between 4 days and 4 weeks following vaccination.
- Similar conditions can also occur naturally, and clotting problems are a common complication of coronavirus (Covid-19) infection.
- An increased risk has not yet been seen after other Covid-19 vaccines in the UK.
[Find out more about Covid-19 vaccination and blood clotting on GOV.UK](#)

If you are a healthy person aged 30 to 39 years of age

- In the current situation the JCVI has advised that it is preferable for people in this age group to have a vaccine other than AZ.
- You are more at risk of the serious consequences of Covid-19 and will have the most benefit from being vaccinated if you are older, male, from certain minority ethnic backgrounds, in some occupations, or are obese.
- It is important that you have the vaccination as soon as possible to protect you and to reduce the chance of passing on the virus.
- If the situation changes and you are offered the AZ vaccination you may go ahead after you have considered all the risks and benefits.
- Please carefully consider the risk to both you and your family and friends of Covid-19 before making your decision

If you are a healthy younger person aged 18 to 29

- Currently JCVI has advised that it is preferable for people under 30 to have a vaccine other than AZ because the risk from Covid-19 infection is so low.
- If you are offered the AZ vaccination you may wish to go ahead after you have considered all the risks and benefits for you.

I'm under 40 and have had the AZ jab, what about the second dose?

- If you have already had a first dose of AZ vaccine without suffering this rare side effect you should complete the course.
- This includes people aged 18 to 39 years who are health and social care workers, unpaid carers and family members of those who are immunosuppressed.
- It is expected that the first dose of the vaccine will have given you some protection, particularly against severe disease.
- Having the second dose will give you higher and longer lasting protection and tends to cause less of the common side effects (including short lived headache).

Allergic reactions

- Tell healthcare staff before you are vaccinated if you've ever had a serious allergic reaction.
- You should not have the Covid-19 vaccine if you have ever had a serious allergic reaction (including anaphylaxis) to:
 - a previous dose of the same vaccine
 - any of the ingredients in the vaccine

- Serious allergic reactions are rare. If you do have a reaction to the vaccine, it usually happens in minutes. Staff giving the vaccine are trained to deal with allergic reactions and treat them immediately.

Will the vaccines work with the new strains?

- There is no evidence currently that the new strains will be resistant to the vaccines we have, so we are continuing to vaccinate people as normal. Scientists are looking now in detail at the characteristics of the virus in relation to the vaccines.
- Viruses, such as the winter flu virus, often branch into different strains but these small variations rarely render vaccines ineffective.

Can I get one privately?

- No. Vaccinations are only available through the NHS. You can be contacted by the NHS, your employer, or a GP surgery local to you, to receive your vaccine. Remember, the vaccine is free of charge.
 - The NHS will never ask you for your bank account or card details.
 - The NHS will never ask you for your PIN or banking password.
 - The NHS will never arrive unannounced at your home to administer the vaccine.
 - The NHS will never ask you to prove your identity by sending copies of personal documents such as your passport, driving licence, bills or pay slips.
- If you receive a call you believe to be fraudulent, hang up. If you believe you have been the victim of fraud or identity theft you should report this directly to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040. Where the victim is vulnerable, and particularly if you are worried that someone has or might come to your house, report it to the Police online or by calling 101.

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

- The 1st dose of the Covid-19 vaccine should give you good protection from COVID-19 from 3 or 4 weeks after you've had it. But you need to have the 2 doses of the vaccine to give you longer lasting protection.
- There is a chance you might still get or spread coronavirus even if you have the vaccine.
- This means it is important to:
 - continue to follow [social distancing guidance](#)
 - if you can, wear something that covers your nose and mouth in places where it's hard to stay away from other people

How does the vaccine work?

- The vaccine works by making a protein from the virus that is important for creating protection. The protein works in the same way they do for other vaccines by stimulating the immune system to make antibodies and cells to fight the infection.

Can people pick what vaccine they want?

- No. 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.

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

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

Advice if you're of childbearing age, pregnant or breastfeeding

- If you're pregnant, you should be offered the Covid-19 vaccine when you're eligible for it. It's preferable for you to have the Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna vaccine because they've been more widely used during pregnancy in other countries and have not caused any safety issues.
- You can also have the Covid-19 vaccine if you're breastfeeding.
- Speak to a healthcare professional before you have the vaccination. They will discuss the benefits and risks with you.
- There's no evidence that the Covid-19 vaccine has any effect on your chances of becoming pregnant. There's no need to avoid pregnancy after vaccination.
- The vaccine cannot give you or your baby Covid-19.
- [Read the latest COVID-19 vaccine advice if you are pregnant, may get pregnant or are breastfeeding on GOV.UK](#)
- [Read the latest Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and Royal College of Midwives statement on the COVID-19 vaccine and fertility](#)

People who live and work in care homes

- Anyone who lives or works in a care home can get the Covid-19 vaccine.
- Contact your care home manager about getting vaccinated.

What is being done to encourage vaccine uptake in black, Asian, minority ethnic and other disproportionately affected communities/groups?

- We understand that some communities have specific concerns and may be more hesitant in taking the vaccine than others. The NHS is working collaboratively with partners to ensure vaccine messages reaches as diverse an audience as possible and are tailored to meet their needs.
- This includes engagement with community and faith-led groups, charities and other voluntary organisations.

I am a carer, when can I have my vaccine?

- You may be able to get the Covid-19 vaccine if any of the following apply:
 - you are a main carer for someone at high risk from Covid-19
 - your GP record shows you are a carer
 - you get a Carer's Allowance or other support following an assessment by your local authority
- You may be able to book appointments at a larger vaccination centre or pharmacy.
- If you think you should be eligible as a carer but you cannot book an appointment online, speak to your GP surgery. Your GP may be able to update your GP record and book an appointment for you at a local NHS service.