



## 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 are aged over 50, a carer or have an underlying health condition, book your COVID vaccination appointment at [nhs.uk/covid-vaccination](https://nhs.uk/covid-vaccination), call 119 or speak to your GP.
- It is never too late to get the Covid vaccine – if you have any concerns, speak to your GP or a healthcare professional.

### 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 50 and over
  - 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](https://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.

## 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

## 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 has been approved by the MHRA but is not expected to be delivered to the NHS until Spring.

## 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 coronavirus 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](#)

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

- Recently there have been reports of a very rare condition involving blood clots and unusual bleeding after vaccination. This is being carefully reviewed but the risk factors for this condition are not yet clear.
- Although this condition remains extremely rare there appears to be a higher risk in people who have had the first dose of the AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccine. Around 4 people develop this condition for every million doses of AZ vaccine doses given.

- This is seen slightly more often in younger people and tends to occur between 4 days and 2 weeks following vaccination.
- This condition can also occur naturally, and clotting problems are a common complication of COVID-19 infection.
- An increased risk has not yet been seen after other COVID-19 vaccines but is being carefully monitored.

### **If you are a healthy younger person aged 18 to 39**

- The MHRA and the JCVI advises that all adults in this age group (including health and social care workers) should still receive any of the available COVID-19 vaccines.
- The benefits of vaccination in protecting you against the serious consequences of COVID-19 outweigh any risk of this rare condition.
- You should also complete your course with the same vaccine you had for the first dose.
- Currently JCVI has advised that it is preferable for people under 30 to have a vaccine other than AZ.
- If you choose to have another COVID-19 vaccine you may have to wait to be protected.
- You may wish to go ahead with the AZ vaccination after you have considered all the risks and benefits for you.

### **I'm under 30 and have had the AZ jab, what about the second dose?**

- If you have already had a first dose of AZ vaccine without suffering any serious side effects you should complete the course.
- This includes people aged 18 to 29 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.

### **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 coronavirus. 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

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

- 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.

### **What about the Moderna vaccine?**

- The MHRA have now decided – after extensive assessment – that the Moderna vaccines are safe and effective.
- The Government provisionally ordered several million doses of this vaccine ahead of it being approved, but we don't expect Moderna to be able to make these available until Spring 2021.

### **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.

### **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. Both vaccines are classed as being very effective.
- The Oxford/AstraZeneca is easier to store and transport, meaning we can deliver them in more places, and we expect to have more doses available as they are manufactured in the UK, so we would expect that most people are likely to receive this vaccine over the coming weeks and months.

### **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.
  - 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>

### **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.
- If you have a high temperature you may have coronavirus or another infection.

- If your symptoms get worse or you are worried, call 111.
- Contact your GP surgery if you have a headache for more than 4 days after your vaccination or get bruising somewhere other than where you had your vaccination.

### **Is it mandatory?**

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

### **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.

### **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.

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

- There is no evidence the COVID-19 vaccine is unsafe if you're pregnant. But more evidence is needed before you can routinely be offered it.
- The JCVI has updated its advice to recommend you may be able to have the vaccine if you are pregnant and:
  - at high risk of getting coronavirus because of where you work
  - have a health condition that means you're at high risk of serious complications of coronavirus
- You can have the COVID-19 vaccine if you are breastfeeding.
- Speak to a healthcare professional before you have the vaccination. They will discuss the benefits and risks with you.
- You do not 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](#)

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **What time will the opening hours of vaccination centres be?**

- Standard opening times for vaccination centres will be 8am – 8pm, seven days a week. To test the system and make sure the space is safe for visitors and staff, most vaccination centres in the first day or days may open slightly later.

### **I am an unpaid carer, when can I have my vaccine?**

- If you are caring for someone with underlying health conditions who would struggle to cope if you became unwell, you can help the vaccination effort by emailing your GP practice or using its website to make sure your local surgery knows you are an unpaid carer.