



Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine

The coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine is safe and effective. It gives you the best protection against coronavirus.

Who can get the COVID-19 vaccine

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's being given to:

- people aged 50 and over
- people at high risk from coronavirus (Link: www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/who-is-at-high-risk-from-coronavirus-clinically-extremely-vulnerable/) (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

Find out more about who is eligible to have a COVID-19 vaccine (Link: www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/who-can-get-the-vaccine/)

The order in which people will be offered the vaccine is based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).

Read the latest JCVI advice on priority groups for the COVID-19 vaccination on GOV.UK (Link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/priority-groups-for-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-advice-from-the-jcvi-30-december-2020>)

If you are not eligible yet

Wait to be contacted. The NHS will let you know when it's your turn to have the vaccine. It's important not to contact the NHS for a vaccination before then.

How the COVID-19 vaccine is given

The COVID-19 vaccine is given as an injection into your upper arm.

It's given as 2 doses. You will have the 2nd dose 3 to 12 weeks after having the 1st dose.

You will have 2 doses of the same vaccine.

How to get the COVID-19 vaccine

You can book your vaccination appointments online if any of the following apply:

- you are aged 50 or over
- you are at high risk from coronavirus (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/>) (clinically extremely vulnerable)
- you have a condition that puts you at higher risk (clinically vulnerable)
- you have a learning disability
- you get a Carer's Allowance, get support following an assessment by your local authority or your GP record shows you are a carer

You can book appointments at a larger vaccination centre or a pharmacy that provides COVID-19 vaccinations.

You do not need to wait to be contacted by the NHS.

 **Book your COVID-19 vaccination appointments** (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/>)

How safe is the COVID-19 vaccine?

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, have been very rare. No long-term complications have been reported.

To find out more about the vaccines approved in the UK, see:

- GOV.UK: Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for COVID-19 approved by MHRA (Link: <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 (Link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-approval-of-covid-19-vaccine-astrazeneca>)

- GOV.UK: Moderna vaccine for COVID-19 approved by MHRA (Link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-approval-of-covid-19-vaccine-moderna>)

How effective is the COVID-19 vaccine?

The 1st dose of the COVID-19 vaccine should give you good protection from coronavirus 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 (Link: www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/social-distancing/what-you-need-to-do/)
- if you can, wear something that covers your nose and mouth in places where it's hard to stay away from other people

Read more about why vaccines are safe and important (Link: www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/why-vaccination-is-safe-and-important/), including how they work and what they contain.

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 coronavirus. Stay at home and get a test.

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.

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.

Important

There have been reports in some countries of a small number of people having blood clots after the Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.

The MHRA says the current evidence does not suggest the clots were caused by the vaccine and you should still get vaccinated when invited.

For more information see, GOV.UK: UK regulator confirms people should continue to receive the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine (Link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-regulator-confirms-that-people-should-continue-to-receive-the-covid-19-vaccine-astrazeneca>).

Report a side effect

You can report any suspected side effect using the Coronavirus Yellow Card safety scheme.

Report a vaccine side effect on the Coronavirus Yellow Card website (Link: <https://coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/>)

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

There's 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're 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'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're pregnant, may get pregnant or are breastfeeding on GOV.UK (Link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-women-of-childbearing-age-currently-pregnant-planning-a-pregnancy-or-breastfeeding>)

Read the latest Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and Royal College of Midwives statement on the COVID-19 vaccine and fertility (Link: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/news/RCOG-and-RCM-respond-to-misinformation-around-Covid-19-vaccine-and-fertility/>)

COVID-19 vaccine ingredients

The approved COVID-19 vaccines do not contain any animal products or egg.

More information

- Sign up to be contacted for coronavirus vaccine research (Link: www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/research/coronavirus-vaccine-research/)
- GOV.UK: COVID-19 vaccination guide for older adults (Link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-guide-for-older-adults>)
- GOV.UK: why you have to wait for your COVID-19 vaccine (Link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-why-you-are-being-asked-to-wait>)
- GOV.UK: COVID-19 vaccination booking: an appointment letter (Link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-booking-an-appointment-letter>)
- NHS Inform: coronavirus vaccination in Scotland (Link: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/immunisation/vaccines/coronavirus-covid-19-vaccine>)
- Public Health Wales: coronavirus vaccination in Wales (Link: <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/immunisation-and-vaccines/covid-19-vaccination-information/>)
- Public Health Agency: coronavirus vaccination in Northern Ireland (Link: <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/northern-ireland-covid-19-vaccination-programme>)

More in Coronavirus vaccination (Link: www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/)

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Who can get the vaccine (Link: www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/who-can-get-the-vaccine/)

How you will be contacted (Link: www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/how-you-will-be-contacted/)

What happens at your appointment (Link: www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/what-happens-at-your-appointment/)

Health conditions and coronavirus vaccination (Link: www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/health-conditions/)

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