

The
COVID-19
vaccine

Important information for adults

Protect yourself against COVID-19



Please read this leaflet before you get the vaccine





What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a very infectious respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. COVID-19 spreads through the air when people cough or sneeze, or when they touch surfaces where it has landed then touch their eyes, nose or mouth.

The common symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- new continuous cough
- fever/high temperature (37.8°C)
- loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste.

It is also possible to have COVID-19 without showing any symptoms. If you develop symptoms, you should take a COVID-19 test.

COVID-19 can affect anyone. It can cause serious illness, hospitalisation and even death. You may also have milder disease, or be infected without realising it.

For more information about COVID-19, visit [nhsinform.scot/covid19](https://www.nhsinform.scot/covid19)

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The COVID-19 vaccine

Who is being offered the COVID-19 vaccine?

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises that all adults aged 18 years and over should be offered two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine and a booster dose.

Some people at higher risk from COVID-19 are eligible for additional doses (third primary dose and spring booster dose). See pages 10 and 11.

NHS Scotland strongly recommends you get all the doses you are offered. This is important for longer-term protection against COVID-19.

The COVID-19 vaccine is free to everyone living in Scotland.

Which vaccine will I be offered?

The COVID-19 vaccines being offered as first and second doses in the UK are:

- Pfizer/BioNTech
- Moderna
- AstraZeneca (offered to people aged 40 years and over with no underlying health conditions)

You will be offered the right vaccine for you. You will be offered either the Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna vaccine as a booster dose.* Studies have shown that you only need a half dose of Moderna to boost the immune system well.

Your booster vaccine may be the same or different from the vaccines that you had before.

* AstraZeneca may be given as your booster dose if you have medical reasons that mean you cannot have Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna.

What are the benefits of getting the COVID-19 vaccine?

Being healthy does not reduce your risk of getting COVID-19 and passing it on. You can spread COVID-19 to family and those around you, even if you have very mild symptoms or no symptoms at all.

- The vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.
- The vaccine will reduce your risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19. Catching COVID-19 can be serious and may lead to long-term complications.
- The COVID-19 vaccine has been shown to reduce the rates of serious illness and save lives.



Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?

NHS Scotland will only use a vaccine if it meets the required standards of safety and effectiveness. All medicines, including vaccines, are tested for safety and effectiveness before they're allowed to be used.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has to assess all the data and also ensure a vaccine works and that all the necessary trials and checks have been completed.

It has studied:

- lab and clinical trial results
- manufacturing and quality controls
- product sampling
- testing of the final product.

The MHRA will only approve a vaccine for supply in the UK if the expected standards of safety, quality and efficacy are met. The safety and effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines continues to be checked while in use.

How does the COVID-19 vaccine work?

The COVID-19 vaccine does not cause COVID-19. It helps to build up your immunity to the virus, so your body will fight it off more easily if it affects you. If you do get COVID-19, it can make the symptoms milder.

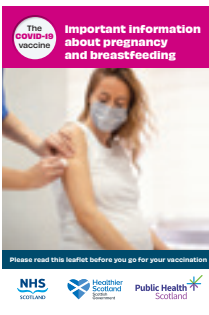
Fertility

There is no evidence to suggest that the COVID-19 vaccine will affect fertility in women or men. If you are thinking of getting pregnant, the vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and your baby against the known risks of COVID-19 in pregnancy. You do not need to avoid pregnancy after getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

Pregnancy and breastfeeding

The JCVI has advised that pregnant women of any age should be prioritised as a clinical risk group for COVID-19 vaccination. The COVID-19 vaccine is strongly recommended in pregnancy.

If you are breastfeeding, or planning to breastfeed, you can get the COVID-19 vaccine. You should not stop breastfeeding to be vaccinated against COVID-19. You can continue to breastfeed as normal after vaccination.



For more information, visit
nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccinepregnancy

Your COVID-19 vaccination journey

First primary dose

If you have not had a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, you can:

- call **0800 030 8013** to book an appointment
- register online at **nhsinform.scot/vaccineregistration**
- attend a drop-in clinic, if they are available in your area. Visit **nhsinform.scot/vaccinedropinclinics** for more information.

COVID-19 vaccination offers good protection from 3 to 4 weeks after the first dose.

Second primary dose

The JCVI recommends a minimum gap of 8 weeks between first and second doses.

You will be advised when to return for your second dose. Alternatively, you can attend a drop-in clinic from 8 weeks after your first dose if they are available in your area.

For more information on first and second doses visit nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine

Booster dose

Like some other vaccines, levels of protection may begin to reduce over time. The COVID-19 vaccine booster dose will help extend the protection you gained from your previous doses and give you longer-term protection.

The JCVI recommends that the booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine is offered to everyone aged 18 years or over, at least 12 weeks after your second dose.

You can get your booster dose by:

- booking online at **nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccinebooster**
- calling **0800 030 8013** to book an appointment
- attending a drop-in clinic, if they are available in your area. Visit **nhsinform.scot/vaccinedropinclinics** for more information.



Third primary dose

+
**Additional
dose for
those
eligible**

Recommended for people with a severely weakened immune system.

The third primary dose is an extra 'top-up' dose to help increase the level of protection for people who may not have generated a full immune response to the first two doses and might be less protected.

This includes those who have:

- blood cancers (such as leukaemia or lymphoma)
- lowered immunity due to treatment (such as steroid medication, biological therapy, chemotherapy or radiotherapy)
- lowered immunity due to inherited disorders of the immune system
- an organ or bone marrow transplant
- diseases that affect the immune system such as poorly controlled HIV.

This dose should be given at least 8 weeks after your second dose, but the timing will depend on any treatment you may be having. Your health professional can advise on the best time to have your third primary dose.

If you have not had either your first or second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, you will need to have them before getting your third primary dose.

A third primary dose is different from a booster dose. You are also eligible for booster doses.

For more information about the third primary dose, visit nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccinethirddose

Spring booster dose

+
**Additional
dose for
those
eligible**

Recommended for older people and those with a weakened immune system.

COVID-19 infection may be more serious and protection from the vaccine may be lower and may wear off more quickly in these groups.

The JCVI recommends a spring booster dose for:

- adults aged 75 years and over (or will turn 75 by 30 June 2022)
- residents in care homes for older adults
- people with a weakened immune system.

The spring booster dose will usually be offered around 6 months since your last dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Some people may be invited sooner than this (at least 3 months since their last dose) to help protect them against any increase in COVID-19 infections. NHS Scotland will contact you to arrange your appointment at the right time for you.

The spring booster dose is being offered as a precaution to those at high risk. The spring booster dose should help to reduce your risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19, or being admitted to hospital with COVID-19.

If you have not yet had your booster dose, but you have had all your primary doses, you can have the spring booster dose as long there has been at least 3 months since your last dose.

You may need another booster dose as well as your usual flu vaccine in the autumn.

For more information about booster doses, visit nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccinebooster

On the day of the vaccine

How is the vaccine given?

The vaccine will be given as an injection in the upper arm. At your vaccination appointment, strict infection prevention and control measures will be in place.

How to prepare for the vaccination

On the day of your vaccination, wear practical clothing so it's easy to access your upper arm up to your shoulder. If you would prefer to be vaccinated in a private space, please let the person giving you your vaccine know.

If you have a fear of needles or feel anxious, try to stay calm and let the person giving you your vaccine know. They will be understanding and can support you.



What if I am ill on the day?

You should still go for your COVID-19 vaccine if you have a minor illness without a fever.

If you're feeling unwell with symptoms of COVID-19, do not attend your vaccine appointment. You should take a COVID-19 test. For more information, visit **nhsinform.scot/testing**

If you feel very unwell, your vaccine may be postponed until you have fully recovered.

I've had COVID-19 before, should I still get the vaccine?

Even if you've already had COVID-19, you could still get it again.

The vaccine will reduce your risk of getting COVID-19. If you do get it again, the vaccine can reduce how serious the symptoms will be.



If you have recently tested positive for COVID-19, you should wait until 4 weeks after the date you tested positive to get the vaccine (any dose).

What are the side effects?

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. It's normal to experience side effects after the vaccine. It shows the vaccine is teaching your body's immune system how to protect itself from the disease. However, not everyone gets them. Most side effects are mild and normally last only a day or two.

Very common side effects in the first day or two include:

- having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection
- feeling tired
- headache, aches and chills
- diarrhoea, nausea and vomiting
- mild flu-like symptoms.

These common side effects are much less serious than developing COVID-19 or complications associated with COVID-19.

You can rest and take the normal dose of paracetamol (follow the advice in the packaging) to help make yourself feel better.

An uncommon side effect is swollen glands in the armpit or neck on the same side as the arm where you had the vaccine. This can last for around 10 days, but if it lasts longer see your health professional. If you are due for breast screening (a mammogram) in the few weeks after the vaccine, then you should mention that you have had the COVID-19 vaccine when you attend.

For more information about side effects, visit nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccinesideeffects

Fever after the vaccine

It's quite common to develop a fever (temperature above 37.8°C) after vaccination. This normally happens within 48 hours of the vaccination and usually goes away within 48 hours.

You do not need to take a COVID-19 test unless you have other COVID-19 symptoms or if you have been advised to by NHS Test and Protect, your Occupational Health team or a Public Health Protection team.

If the fever starts more than 48 hours after the vaccination or lasts longer than 48 hours, you should take a COVID-19 test. For more information, visit nhsinform.scot/testing

Are the side effects different for each dose?

Not all COVID-19 vaccines are the same. Some vaccines tend to cause some side effects after the first dose, and other vaccines may cause some side effects after additional doses. The very common side effects are the same and should only last a day or two.

Even if you do have side effects after the first dose, you still need to have all the recommended doses, unless your side effect was severe or you have been advised not to by your health professional. The full recommended course will give you the best protection against the virus.

What should I do if I am concerned about side effects?

Side effects normally last only a day or two. If your side effects seem to get worse or if you are concerned, call **NHS24** free on **111**. If you do seek advice from a health professional, make sure you tell them about your vaccination so that they can assess you properly.

Less common side effects

Heart inflammation

Worldwide, there have also been recent, rare cases of inflammation of the heart (called myocarditis or pericarditis) reported after COVID-19 vaccines. However, it is not yet clear that these have been caused by the vaccines.

Most of these cases have been in younger men and usually happen a few days after vaccination. Most of these people recovered and felt better following rest and simple treatments. Longer-term follow-up is ongoing in the UK and elsewhere to better understand this reaction. You should seek medical advice urgently if you experience:

- chest pain
- shortness of breath
- feelings of having a fast-beating, fluttering, or pounding heart.

AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine and rare blood clots

There have been reports of an extremely rare condition involving blood clots and unusual bleeding after vaccination with the AstraZeneca (AZ) COVID-19 vaccine. This is being carefully reviewed but the risk factors for this condition are not yet clear.

For people under 40 without underlying health conditions, it is currently advised that it's preferable to have another COVID-19 vaccine instead of the AZ vaccine.

For more information, please see the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine and rare blood clots leaflet at nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccineleaflets



If you had serious side effects after any previous dose, you may be advised to avoid or delay further vaccination. You should discuss this with your health professional.

Reporting side effects

You can report suspected side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine through the Yellow Card Scheme at **coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk** or by calling **0800 731 6789**.

This information is a guide only. Always get medical advice from **NHS24** free on **111** if you're worried about your health.

People with bleeding disorders or taking medication to thin their blood

People taking medication to thin the blood, such as warfarin, can safely get the COVID-19 vaccine as long as their treatment is stable. You should let the person giving you the vaccine know what medication you are on.

People with bleeding disorders should consult their specialist or their individual care plan for advice on vaccination.

Are there any reasons I should not get the vaccine?

There are very few people who cannot get the COVID-19 vaccine.

The vaccine should not be given to:

- people who have had a confirmed severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to any of the ingredients of the vaccine
- those who have had a confirmed severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of the same COVID-19 vaccine.

People with a history of serious allergic reaction to food, an identified drug or vaccine, or an insect sting can get any COVID-19 vaccine, as long as they are not known to be allergic to any component of the vaccine.

It's important that you tell the person giving you your vaccine if you've ever had a severe allergic reaction.

The vaccine does not contain any animal products or egg.

For more information on vaccine ingredients, and links to the manufacturers' information leaflets, call 0800 030 8013 or visit nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine

After the vaccine

After you've had your vaccine, it's important that you continue to follow the latest guidance to help reduce the spread of the virus.

Children and young people

NHS Scotland is offering the COVID-19 vaccine to all children and young people aged 5 to 17 years.

For information about the COVID-19 vaccine for children aged 5 to 11 years, visit nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccinechildren



For information about the COVID-19 vaccine for children and young people aged 12 to 17 years, visit nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccineyoungpeople

For more information about the COVID-19 vaccine:



visit nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine



call **0800 030 8013**
(available 8am–8pm, 7 days a week).



Translations



Easy read



BSL



Audio



Large print



Braille

For more information, including other formats and translation support:



www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine



0800 030 8013



p hs.otherformats@p hs.scot

Information correct at time of publication. Please visit www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine for the latest information.

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nhsinform.scot/data-protection
informationgovernance.scot.nhs.uk/use-of-your-immunisation-data

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