

Covid-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions

Information correct at 26/05/2021

General Questions

Q: Can I decide which vaccine I get? Or influence which vaccine I get by making an appointment at a particular location?

A: The type of vaccine offered at different vaccination sites is not usually published by the NHS and you will be told only at the time of your appointment which vaccine you will receive (Pfizer/BioNTech, AstraZeneca/Oxford or Moderna). All the vaccines are safe, and your age group and risk factors will have been taken into account when selecting the vaccine for you.

Walk in sessions - To make it even easier for eligible people to get protected against COVID-19, a number of walk-in vaccination sessions have opened up for people across Hertfordshire and nearby west Essex. This means people can turn up during walk-in sessions without the need for an appointment. Most of these are offering the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine. A list of vaccination centres offering walk-in sessions is available here - [Locations and opening times available here](#).

Q: Can I get a leftover vaccine at a vaccination centre at the end of the day?

A: Great care is taken to match vaccination appointments carefully against the supplies of the vaccine which are received by each centre. The number of missed appointments is fortunately very low indeed - we have found that people who book vaccination appointments are very keen to attend. On the occasions when there are doses available at the end of a session, vaccination centres contact people from a reserve list of people eligible to be vaccinated in line with Government guidance to ensure that the vaccine is not wasted.

Q: A member of my household has a weakened/suppressed immune system and has already received their vaccine, but they still feel at risk because no one else in the house has been vaccinated. How can I access a vaccine so they can feel safer?

A: As of 29 March 2021, people over the age of 16 living with immunosuppressed adults became eligible for a coronavirus vaccine. GPs have been advised to identify the household members of immunosuppressed patients on their register and invite them to book a vaccine. If you have not heard from your GP yet, get in touch with them to get your vaccine appointment booked in.

Q: What if I am not registered with a GP or having trouble getting registered?

A: To make sure you get your call to be vaccinated, you don't have to be registered with a GP surgery, but it can make it easier if you are registered. Anyone can register and you do not need proof of address or immigration status. If you are not registered, there are instructions on how to do so here: [Register with a GP](#)

Vaccine Second-Dose

Q: I had my first dose of the coronavirus vaccine, but the route I used to access the booking system is now defunct. I did book both appointments. How can I confirm that my 2nd dose is still going ahead?

A: If you have not received any communications to say your appointment has been cancelled, it is safe to assume that your appointment will be going ahead as planned.

Q: I had my first dose of the coronavirus vaccine, but the place I had it is now closed. How can I book my 2nd dose?

A: If you have received no further instructions or communications about the closing of the vaccination centre, the system should have been updated with your information so that you can contact your GP to arrange your 2nd dose.

Q: How do I cancel or rearrange my appointment?

A: If you can't attend your appointment for any reason, please cancel or rearrange it so that the appointment slot can be given to someone else. If you booked through the NHS website, you can do this through the 'manage your appointments' section on the booking page. If you booked through 119, you can also ring to rearrange your appointment. If you booked your appointment through your GP practice, please contact them to reschedule.

Q: Why do I need a second dose and when do I get it?

A: You need both doses of the vaccine to gain maximum protection from the virus. Even after you have received your first or second vaccine, you must continue to follow the latest government guidance on social distancing, washing your hands and wearing a face mask (unless you are exempt).

The guidance around the timing of second doses changed on 14 May 2021 to help tackle rising cases of COVID-19 variants and provide the strongest possible protection from the virus at an earlier opportunity.

- **People in the top 9 priority groups (aged 50+, residents in care homes for older adults, frontline health and care workers, people who are extremely clinically vulnerable, people with an underlying health condition):** The recommended interval between first and second doses has been reduced from 12 weeks to 8 weeks. People should continue to attend their second dose appointments as planned. Anyone who needs to bring their appointment forward will be contacted by the NHS.
- **People aged under 50** will continue to get their second dose 12 weeks following their first dose.

If you book your first vaccine on the online national booking system, you will be able to book your second dose at the same time. If you book through your GP practice, they will either book you in for your second dose or will contact you with a date for your second vaccine nearer the time.

Q: I've lost my vaccination card from the first dose, can I still get the second dose?

A: All the details from your first vaccination are recorded in your medical records, so you don't have to have your card with you to receive your second dose. The card is designed for your own information and includes space to write your second-dose appointment as a reminder. Cards cannot be used as proof of vaccination.

Safety

Q: Are there side effects?

A: 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 or go online to NHS 111. You can report any suspected side effect using the [Coronavirus Yellow Card safety scheme](#).

Allergic reactions

Tell healthcare staff before you are vaccinated if you've ever had a serious allergic reaction. In some circumstances, your GP might make arrangements for you to have your vaccination in a hospital setting. 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.

Does the Oxford Astra Zeneca vaccine cause blood clots?

The UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has carried out a detailed review of reports of a very rare blood clotting problem affecting a small number of people who have had the Oxford/AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccine.

It's not yet clear why it affects some people but the risk is extremely low. This condition can also happen in people who have not been vaccinated, and clotting problems are a common complication of COVID-19 infection. The COVID-19 vaccine can help stop you getting seriously ill or dying from coronavirus.

For people aged 40 or over and those with other health conditions, the benefits of being vaccinated outweigh any risk of clotting problems. People are advised to continue to come forward for their vaccine and complete their course with the same vaccine they had for their first dose, unless they suffered serious side effects after their first dose.

For people under 40 without other health conditions who are at lower risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19, it's currently advised that it's preferable to have an alternative to the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine.

The MHRA is continuing to closely monitor vaccine safety and review any concerns reported to them. You can read the latest guidance from Public Health England, including symptoms to look out for [here](#).

Q: Are the vaccines safe for pregnant women, breastfeeding women and those wishing to conceive? Does it affect fertility?

A: The latest advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) is that COVID-19 vaccines should be offered to pregnant women at the same time as the rest of the population, based on their age and clinical risk group.

Data from the United States shows that around 90,000 pregnant women have been vaccinated, mainly with Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, without any safety concerns being raised. Based on available data, the JCVI advises that it's preferable for pregnant women in the UK to be offered the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines where available.

Women should discuss the benefits and risks of having the vaccine with their healthcare professional and reach a joint decision based on individual circumstances. Women should not stop breastfeeding in order to be vaccinated against COVID-19. Women trying to become pregnant do not need to avoid pregnancy after vaccination and there is no evidence to suggest that COVID-19 vaccines will affect fertility.

Read the latest statement from the JCVI [here](#) and Questions/Answers from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists can be found [here](#)