

South West London CCG Frequently Ask Questions

COVID-19

The coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccines are safe, effective and will save lives. They will give you the best protection against coronavirus.

From Monday 13th December 2021 all adults over 30 are able to book in for a vaccination appointment through the [National Booking System](#), adults over 18 will be able to book in for an appointment from Wednesday 15th December.

We advise everyone to book in for an appointment to reduce waiting times. You may need to queue for longer if you choose walk in, as sites may be busy. Appointments can be made using the [National Booking Service](#).

Please remember to wear a mask or face covering when you visit a vaccination clinic.

If you have recently had Coronavirus and are under 18 ideally you should wait 12 weeks after a positive COVID-19 test to receive the COVID-19 Vaccination or at least 4 weeks if you are at higher risk.

Ages 12-15

All 12 to 15 year olds are now eligible for their Covid-19 vaccination – to be delivered as a part of the schools based vaccination programme. They can also receive their vaccination at community vaccination centres across South West London. Appointments can be booked using the [National Booking System](#).

Those aged 12-15 **cannot** walk in to community pharmacies.

Parents and carers of eligible children aged 12 to 15 will be contacted by a local NHS service such as a GP or hospital. They will be informed of their child's vaccine eligibility and offered the opportunity to book an appointment.

Following a recent announcement from the JCVI, the NHS is also working on plans to offer 2nd doses to all children aged 12-15 who are not already eligible. **Please note that this is not yet available. You should wait to be contacted by the NHS.**

Ages 16-17

If you are 16 or over, book your COVID-19 vaccination appointment at www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination, call 119 or speak to your GP.

For young people aged 16 and 17, you can receive your second vaccine dose 12 weeks or more following your first dose if you are low risk and 8 weeks following your 1st dose if you are high risk.

Following the recent announcement from the JCVI, the NHS is also working on plans to offer a booster dose to people aged 16-17 with a weakened immune system. **Please note that this is not yet available.**

Ages 18+

For adults aged 18 and over your 2nd dose can be booked 8 weeks or more after your first dose. You can book a vaccination appointment at www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination

Following the recent announcement from the JCVI, the NHS is also working on plans to offer a booster dose to everyone aged 18 years old and over. **Please note that you will be contacted by the NHS in order of age.**

Booster Dose

Booster doses are currently being offered to:

- people aged 30 and over from Monday 13th December 2021 and people aged 18 and over from the 15th December 2021
- people who live and work in care homes
- frontline health and social care workers
- people aged 16 and over with a health condition that puts them at high risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19
- people aged 16 and over who are a main carer for someone at high risk from COVID-19
- people aged 16 and over who live with someone who is more likely to get infections (such as someone who has HIV, has had a transplant or is having certain treatments for cancer, lupus or rheumatoid arthritis)

Booster vaccines will only be offered if you had your 2nd dose 3 months (91 days) ago or more.

You will be offered the right vaccine for you, which may be the same or different from the vaccines that you had before. This means your booster dose may be different from the vaccines you had for your 1st and 2nd doses.

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.

[Find out if you're eligible to get the jab](#)

About COVID-19/Coronavirus/SARS-COV-2

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is caused by a new coronavirus. It is very infectious and can lead to severe respiratory disease.

Many people who are infected may not have any symptoms or only have mild symptoms. These commonly start with a cough, fever, headache and loss of taste or smell.

Some people will feel very tired, have aching muscles, diarrhoea and vomiting, fever and confusion.

A small number of people then go on to have severe disease which may mean they are admitted to hospital. For more information, please visit the [gov.uk website](http://gov.uk).

If you have had coronavirus, do you still need the vaccine?

If you have had COVID-19 then your body may have built up some natural immunity to the virus, however we don't know how long this immunity lasts or if it fully protects you from

catching COVID-19 again. It is likely that natural immunity won't last as long as the immunity given to you by a vaccine. So, it is still very important to take up the offer of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Can you catch COVID-19 by having the vaccine?

You cannot catch COVID-19 from the vaccine, but it is possible to have caught COVID-19 and not realise you have the symptoms until after your vaccination appointment.

If I don't have the vaccine and get COVID-19, what's the worst that can happen?

Research has shown the vaccines help reduce your risk of getting seriously ill or dying from COVID-19, reduce your risk of catching or spreading COVID-19 and protect you against COVID-19 variants

About the 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](#).

Who will get the vaccine and 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:

- Children and young people aged 12-17
- People aged 18 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

All 12 to 15 year olds are now eligible for their Covid-19 vaccination – to be delivered as a part of the schools based vaccination programme. They can also get their vaccination at community vaccination centres across South West London. Appointments can be booked using the **National Booking System**. Those aged 12-15 cannot walk in to community pharmacies

Parents and carers of children aged 12 to 15 will be contacted by a local NHS service such as a GP or hospital. They will be informed of their child's vaccine eligibility and offered the opportunity to book an appointment.

If you are 16 and over and eligible to get a vaccine, you can book appointments at a larger vaccination centre or pharmacy now by visiting [nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk) or calling 119. Anyone over the age of 16 can attend a walk in vaccination site.

[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.](#)

[I am a carer, when can I have my vaccine?](#)

The vaccine has now been offered to all age cohorts over the age of 12 in the UK. If you are a carer and would like to get the COVID-19 Vaccine you can attend a walk in clinic close to you. You can find your nearest walk in [here](#).

You may also be able to [book an appointment](#) 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.

[Which vaccine will I get?](#)

The most common vaccines in use in the UK include AstraZeneca, Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech. Most people can have any of the Covid-19 vaccines but some people are only offered certain vaccines.

For example:

If you're pregnant or under 40 you will usually be offered appointments for the Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna vaccines.

If you're under 18, you'll only be offered the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine.

[Can I get the COVID-19 Vaccine 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 does the vaccine work?](#)

Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 Vaccines are both mRNA vaccines. This means that they both work by stimulating the body's natural defences (immune system). The vaccines work by causing the body to produce protection (antibodies) against the virus that causes COVID-19.

The vaccine uses a substance called messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA) to carry instructions that cells in the body can use to make the spike protein that is also on the virus. The cells then make antibodies against the spike protein to help fight off the virus. This will help to protect you against COVID-19. Both these vaccines have similar side effects following the vaccination.

The AZ vaccine works by delivering the genetic code of the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein to the body's cells, similarly to the mRNA vaccines. Once inside the body, the spike protein is produced, causing the immune system to recognise it and initiate an immune response. This means that if the body later encounters the spike protein of the coronavirus, the immune system will recognise it and destroy it before causing infection.

Who is responsible for the programme?

The vaccine rollout is the responsibility of the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), working with NHS England, NHS Improvement and Public Health England to co-ordinate vaccinations across a large network of vaccination sites including in hospitals, GPs and pharmacies.

Can people pick which vaccine they want?

No. When you book, you'll only be offered appointments for vaccines that are suitable for you. 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.

Can you pay for the booster?

No. Vaccinations are only available through the NHS. You will be contacted by the NHS to receive your vaccine. Remember, the vaccine is free of charge.

Will the vaccine stop people from getting COVID-19?

The COVID-19 vaccines have been shown to reduce the chance of you suffering from COVID-19 disease. It may take a few weeks from the first dose for your body to build up protection.

There is a chance you might still get or spread COVID-19 even if you have a vaccine, so it's important to follow advice about [how to avoid catching and spreading COVID-19](#).

Why is the vaccine not administered in a spray or drops for children?

Currently it is only available in an injectable form but work continues on developing the vaccine further.

Different Vaccines and Dose Numbers

How many doses will I get?

People aged 12-15 can now get their first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine.

Individuals aged 12-15 will also be eligible for second dose of the vaccine 12 weeks following their first dose and this will soon be available in South West London Vaccination sites.

Currently the 2nd dose of the COVID-19 vaccine is being offered to all individuals 16-17, 12 weeks following the 1st dose and individuals 16-17 who are high risk can receive their 2nd dose 8 weeks following the 1st dose. All adults 18 and over are offered 2 doses of the COVID-19 Vaccine.

The JCVI is also advising that a third primary dose be offered to individuals aged 12 years and over with severe immunosuppression. A third primary dose is an extra 'top-up' dose for those who may not have generated a full immune response to the first 2 doses. The JCVI advises that for adults aged 18 and older, either the Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines be administered for the third dose. For those aged 12 to 17, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is preferred.

People aged 40 and over are also offered a booster dose.

Which COVID-19 vaccine will I get?

Most people will be offered a booster dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine or Moderna vaccine.

This means your booster dose may be different from the vaccines you had for your 1st and 2nd doses.

Some people may be offered a booster dose of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine if they cannot have the Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna vaccine.

One of the questions asked on the consent form was have you had the flu vaccination in the last week. Is this something to be concerned about?

No there is nothing to be concerned about and we need all those eligible for the flu vaccine to have it. At present the flu vaccine is not being given at the same time as the covid vaccine in schools but there are no known risks from giving both at the same time.

[What vaccine will younger people have and how many doses?](#)

If you're under 18, you'll only be offered the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine and most children and young people aged 12 to 15 are currently only being offered a 1st dose. 12-15 year olds will soon be able to take up the offer of a second vaccination dose 12 weeks following their first dose at vaccination sites in South West London. Some children who are at increased risk from COVID-19, or who live with someone who is severely immunosuppressed, are currently being offered 2 doses of the vaccine. From the 22nd November 2021, young people aged 16 and 17 can receive the 2nd dose of the COVID-19 Vaccine 12 weeks following their 1st dose.

[Who is eligible for the booster?](#)

Booster vaccine doses will be available on the NHS for people most at risk from COVID-19 who have already had 2 doses of a vaccine.

This includes:

- people aged 30 and over from the 13th December 2021 and people aged 18 and over from the 15th December 2021 people who live and work in care homes
- frontline health and social care workers
- people aged 16 and over with a health condition that puts them at high risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19
- carers aged 16 and over
- people aged 16 and over who live with someone who is more likely to get infections (such as someone who has HIV, has had a transplant or is having certain treatments for cancer, lupus or rheumatoid arthritis)
- People who are pregnant and in 1 of the eligible groups can also get a booster dose
- Booster
- Those aged 40 and over are now being offered a booster dose of either Pfizer or Moderna vaccine 6 months (182 days after your 2nd vaccine dose) These vaccines have already been given to millions of people in the UK.
- You will be offered the right vaccine for you, which may be the same or different from the vaccines that you had before. This means your booster dose may be different from the vaccines you had for your 1st and 2nd doses.
- AstraZeneca may be an option if this is the vaccine that you had for the first 2 doses or if you cannot have the Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna Vaccine

[Booster](#)

Those aged 30 and over are now being offered a booster dose of either Pfizer or Moderna vaccine 3 months (91 days after your 2nd vaccine dose) These vaccines have already been given to millions of people in the UK. This offer for a booster dose will also be available to adults aged 18 and over from the 15th December 2021.

You will be offered the right vaccine for you, which may be the same or different from the vaccines that you had before. This means your booster dose may be different from the vaccines you had for your 1st and 2nd doses.

AstraZeneca may be an option if this is the vaccine that you had for the first 2 doses or if you cannot have the Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna Vaccine

[How and when to get your COVID-19 booster vaccination?](#)

If you are eligible, you'll be offered a booster dose at least 3 months (91 days) after you had your 2nd dose.

Most people will be invited to book an appointment at a larger vaccination centre, pharmacy, or local NHS service such as a GP surgery. Most people will be invited to book an appointment at a larger vaccination centre, pharmacy, or local NHS service such as a GP surgery. You can book in for your vaccine with the [National Booking Service](#).

Frontline health and social care workers will be invited to book an appointment through their employer.

[Can you get the flu vaccination and COVID-19 booster vaccination together?](#)

Most people who can get a COVID-19 booster vaccine are also eligible for the annual flu vaccine.

If you are offered both vaccines, it's safe to have them at the same time. Co-administration should be considered if the patient is eligible for both programmes and supply and regulation allows.

[Is the third dose of the vaccine the same as the booster dose?](#)

The third dose of the Covid vaccination is a part of the primary course of vaccinations, which means it's in the same group as your first and second dose. The third primary vaccination is only being offered to people who were severely immunosuppressed at the time of their first or second vaccination. Those who receive third dose may also be offered a booster dose when eligible. The Covid-19 booster vaccination is being offered to a larger group of patients. All adults aged 30 and over are offered the booster dose 3 months (91 days) following their 2nd dose and from the 15th December all adults over 18 are also able to book in for a booster dose.

[I am eligible for a booster, what do I do next?](#)

If you are eligible for your booster vaccine, you can book to receive your booster vaccine via the national booking system: [Book or manage a 1st, 2nd or booster dose of the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccination – NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#).

As well as booking online, you can now walk in for your booster at various sites across London: [Walk-in and pop up vaccination clinics – South West London CCG \(swlondonccg.nhs.uk\)](#)

[clinics – South West London CCG \(swlondonccg.nhs.uk\)](#)

Ingredients in the COVID-19 Vaccines

[Are there any artificial colours in the vaccine?](#)

There are no artificial colours in any of the covid vaccines.

[Does the vaccine include any parts from a fetus or animal?](#)

No. There is no fetal or animal material, in any of the COVID-19 vaccines approved in the UK. 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>

Safety of the COVID-19 Vaccines

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](#)

Is it safe for under 18's to have a COVID-19 vaccine and what are the side effects?

Research and data shows that the most common adverse effects following vaccination in children aged 12 to 17 years are injection site pain, fever and headache. These reactions are generally mild, self-limiting and short-lived, typically lasting 1 to 2 days.

Real-world data on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in children is currently limited, but there have been extremely rare reports of myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) and pericarditis (inflammation of the membrane around the heart) following the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines in millions of younger adults.

What is the long-term safety of the vaccines?

The COVID-19 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.

They can cause some side effects, but not everyone gets them. Side effects are usually mild and should not last longer than a week.

What is the concern around the AstraZeneca 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.

Similar conditions can also occur naturally, and clotting problems are a common complication of coronavirus (COVID-19) infection. The clotting risk from the AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine is much less than with many other things including contraceptive pills and significantly less than the risk of serious blood clots after a COVID-19 infection, where the virus raises the risk much more and for longer.

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](#)

[How can we know that any adverse effects are not long-term as there is no long-term safety data?](#) COVID-19 vaccine technologies have been studied for years and used in other treatments without issue. Researchers have been studying and working with mRNA vaccines for decades. We know from experience that any adverse effects from vaccines are seen within days to months of using the vaccine and so we have no reason to believe any different. Beyond vaccines, cancer research has used mRNA to trigger the immune system to target specific cancer cells.

[How did the Covid-19 vaccine get approved after such a short period of testing?](#)

Instead of clinical trials happening sequentially, there was worldwide collaboration. This led to a faster process than normal. There was also collaboration around funding. Governments around the world supported the development of the vaccine and this led to a lot of rigorous development. On the back of that we now have a malaria vaccine.

[Who can report adverse events to the vaccine on the Yellow card scheme? How many deaths have there been in children to the vaccine?](#)

Yellow cards can be completed by anyone and do not necessarily mean the adverse reaction was serious, severe or concerning. It is mandatory for all new medicines. In over 10 million under 18s vaccinated worldwide, there have been no vaccine-related deaths recorded and no serious adverse events observed.

Locations available for Vaccination

[Where will the vaccines be administered?](#)

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

[Where will 12-15 year olds have the vaccines and who will be giving them?](#)

Healthy school-aged children aged 12 to 15 will primarily receive their COVID-19 vaccination in their school. They can also get their vaccination at community vaccination centres across South West London. Appointments can be booked using the [National Booking System](#) and walk in times are available across South West London. Alternative provisions are being made for those who are home schooled, in secure services or specialist mental health settings.

[For 16-17 year olds – where can they have the vaccine?](#)

You can book your appointment at a larger vaccination centre or pharmacy now, or you can wait to be invited to go to a local NHS service. You can also walk into some of the vaccination sites in South West London.

What if I miss the vaccine in school – can I have it somewhere else?

The offer won't go away, we will endeavour to help everyone get their vaccination once they have made the decision that they would like to have it.

Children aged 12-15 can now get their vaccination at community vaccination centres across South West London. Appointments can be booked using the [National Booking System](#). Those aged 12-15 cannot walk in to community pharmacies but walk in times are available in community vaccination sites and hospital hubs.

Side Effects of the COVID-19 Vaccine

Does the COVID-19 vaccine have 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.

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 are the side effects of the COVID-19 booster?

As with your previous dose the common side effects are the same for all COVID-19 vaccines used in the UK, and include:

- having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection – this tends to be worst around 1 to 2 days after the vaccine
 - feeling tired
 - headache
 - general aches, or mild flu like symptoms

You can rest and take paracetamol (follow the dose advice in the packaging) to help make you feel better. Although feeling feverish is not uncommon for 2 to 3 days, a high temperature is unusual and may indicate you have COVID-19 or another infection.

Although a fever can occur within a day or two of vaccination, if you have any other COVID-19 symptoms or your fever lasts longer, stay at home and arrange to have a test. Symptoms following vaccination normally last less than a week. If your symptoms seem to get worse or if you are concerned, you can call NHS 111.

I am concerned about the effects of the vaccine on women and girls' menstrual cycles, is there any possibility that it could have any long term implications?

A link between the vaccine and changes in the menstrual cycle is being researched. Most people who report a change to their period after vaccination find that it returns to normal the following cycle and, importantly, there is no evidence that Covid-19 vaccination adversely affects fertility.

In the cohort of 12-15 year olds, one of the side effects of the vaccine is Myocarditis. How likely is it that my child will get this? What are the signs and symptoms of Myocarditis?

Myocarditis is a very rare side effect of vaccination and would usually be very mild. Common symptoms of myocarditis include:

- Shortness of breath when lightly exercising or walking
- A stabbing pain and/or tightness in the chest which may spread across the body
- Difficulty breathing when resting
- Flu-like symptoms such as a high temperature, tiredness and fatigue
- Palpitations or an abnormal heart rhythm

The evidence to date has shown in young people who have had the vaccine, very small number develop a mild transient form of myocarditis and it resolves. There is no evidence showing which young people are more likely to have it following the vaccine.

Do we know the profile of individuals who are most likely to have side-effects?

Millions of people have had a coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine and the safety of the vaccines continues to be monitored, there is no evidence any particular people have a higher risk of side effects. Mild transient side effects such as sore arm or tiredness, are common after all vaccines and these last for 24-48 hours. Taking paracetamol helps ease symptoms and you must seek medical advice if symptoms last longer than 4 days especially headaches. Reports of serious side effects are very rare.

Effectiveness of the COVID-19 Vaccine

How long will my vaccine be effective for?

It is not yet known how long protection will last, whether regular booster doses will be needed and to what extent the vaccine stops people from catching and spreading the virus or just prevents them from becoming ill.

The JCVI will continue to review emerging scientific data over the next few months, including data relating to the duration of immunity from the current vaccines. Final advice on the booster vaccination may change as a result of this and information will be updated.

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.

All viruses mutate, including the winter flu virus, often branch into different strains but these small variations rarely render vaccines ineffective. This does not mean the COVID-19 Vaccines will not be effective on new variants.

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 to 4 weeks after you've had it. But you need to have the 2 doses of the vaccine to give you longer lasting protection.

The COVID-19 booster vaccine dose helps improve the protection you have from your first 2 doses of the vaccine. It helps give you longer-term protection against getting seriously ill from COVID-19

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 keep your distance from those not living in your household.

When is the best time to have the Covid vaccination after having had a Covid? Does this impact on the effectiveness of a vaccine?

There is no evidence of any safety concerns from vaccinating individuals with a past history of COVID-19 infection, or with detectable COVID-19 antibody so people who have had COVID-19 disease (whether confirmed or suspected) can still receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

For individuals aged 18 and over, we advise you to wait a short while after having had Covid. You can have the vaccine **28 days** after you had a positive test for COVID-19 or **28 days** after your symptoms started.

For individuals aged 12-17 unless you are high risk, you need to wait 12 weeks following a positive COVID-19 test.

[How does this vaccine protect others when you can still pass it on?](#)

When enough people are vaccinated, it's harder for a disease to spread to those who can't have vaccines. Getting vaccinated protects not only you but also your family, friends, and community and it's much safer for you when your immune system learns to fight illnesses through vaccination than from catching covid-19.

Religious and Cultural Implications

[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 reach 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.

Allergies, Health Conditions and Phobias

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 including PEG (Polyethylene Glycol)

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.

[Is it safe to give the vaccine to a child with specific health conditions, including rare genetic disorders and special educational needs?](#)

As previously advised by JCVI, persons aged 12 to 15 years with specific underlying health conditions that put them at risk of severe COVID-19, should be offered 2 doses of Pfizer-BNT162b2 vaccine with an interval of 8 weeks between doses. This currently includes children with severe neuro-disabilities, Down's Syndrome, underlying conditions resulting in immunosuppression, profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD), severe learning disabilities or who are on the learning disability register. Details regarding additional person-groups with underlying health conditions to be offered vaccination will be provided as updates in the Green Book Chapter 14.

[My child panics when they see a needle – what can I do to support them?](#)

This is a common issue. The team going into schools are experienced and will use practiced methods to avoid any anxiety and stress, among young people. We have allowed for enough time to manage needle phobia. As a parent, please do give them reassurance. When attending a vaccination site we would also recommend the child, parent or guardian informs the vaccination team of any phobias.

Fertility, Pregnancy and Breastfeeding

[Does the COVID-19 vaccination affect fertility?](#)

There's no evidence the COVID-19 vaccines have any effect on your chances of becoming pregnant.

There's no need to avoid getting pregnant after being vaccinated

[Is COVID-19 disease serious in pregnancy?](#)

Although the overall risk from COVID-19 disease in pregnant women and their new babies is low, in later pregnancy some women may become seriously unwell and need hospital treatment.

Pregnant women with COVID-19 have a higher risk of intensive care admission than women of the same age who are not pregnant. Women with COVID-19 disease are also 2 to 3 times more likely to have their babies early than women without COVID-19.

Pregnant women with underlying clinical conditions are at even higher risk of suffering serious complications from COVID-19.

[Advice if you're pregnant or breastfeeding](#)

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, you will have been offered the COVID-19 Vaccine in line with when your cohort was eligible.

It is preferable for the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines to be offered to pregnant women in the UK, where available. COVID-19 vaccines are recommended in pregnancy and vaccination is the best way to protect against the known risks of COVID-19 in pregnancy for both women and babies.

COVID-19 vaccines available in the UK, do not contain live coronavirus or any ingredients that are known to be harmful to pregnant women or to a developing baby.

The vaccine is considered to be safe and effective at any stage of pregnancy and during breastfeeding for both the mother and the child. The vaccine cannot give you or your baby COVID-19.

It is recommended that pregnant women receive two doses before giving birth, or before they enter the third trimester, when the risk is greatest.

COVID-19 vaccines are recommended to breastfeeding women. You should not stop breastfeeding in order to be vaccinated against COVID-19. Latest advice, from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, is that you cannot pass any vaccine or its ingredients to your baby through breast milk and so it is fine to continue to breastfeed and have your vaccination. You will pass on antibodies against COVID-19 through breastmilk, these antibodies are not harmful to your baby, and may give some protection against the virus.

[Read the latest Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists information on COVID-19 Vaccines, pregnancy and breastfeeding](#)

[Read the latest .gov information on COVID-19 vaccination: a guide for all women of childbearing age, pregnant or breastfeeding](#)

Mandatory Vaccinations

Is the COVID-19 vaccine it mandatory?

The vaccine is not mandatory unless you work in a care home or are a visiting professional to a care home. From the 1st April 2022 Frontline NHS staff will also be required to be fully COVID-19 vaccinated.

The UK government recently introduced new legislation, effective from 11 November 2021, that requires people working in care homes and visiting professionals to the care home to be COVID-19 vaccinated. The government said its decision was taken following extensive public consultation with staff, providers and residents alike. Mandatory vaccination is designed, according to the government, to ensure care home residents are better protected from the risk of death and serious illness that can arise from contracting COVID-19.

On the 9th November 2021 the Department of Health and Social Care has formally announced that individuals undertaking CQC regulated activities in England must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 no later than 1 April 2022 to protect patients, regardless of their employer, including secondary and primary care.

The government regulations are expected to come into effect from 1 April 2022, subject to parliamentary process. This means that unvaccinated individuals will need to have had their first dose by 3 February 2022, in order to have received their second dose by 1 April 2022.

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.

From 11th November 2021, government guidance states that anyone working or volunteering in a care home will need to be fully vaccinated against coronavirus. You can read the government guidance [here](#) or find the easy read version at [covid-19 vaccination of people working or volunteering in care homes easy read](#).

The Department of Health and Social Care have advised that on a temporary basis, care home workers who are exempt from the COVID-19 Vaccination will need to sign a form to share with their employer as proof of their exemption status. Access the self-certification form [here](#).

Once the NHS covid pass system is launched, care home workers will be able to apply for a formal medical exemption.

Some examples of medical exemption could include individuals receiving hospital care or medication that interacts with the vaccination, allergy to an ingredient in the vaccines or an adverse reaction to their first dose, individuals with a learning disability, autism or an impairment that results in vaccination or testing being distressing and also individuals who are pregnant – can certify for a time limited exemption.

You can access further information including the self-certification form [here](#).

Proof of Vaccination

[How can I get proof of vaccination?](#)

An NHS COVID Pass shows your coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination details or test results. You may be asked to show your pass to travel abroad, or at events and venues in the UK when asked for proof of your COVID-19 status. The NHS COVID pass is not available for children under the age of 16.

You can get the NHS Covid Pass either:

- two weeks after your second vaccine dose
- if you've had a negative PCR or lateral flow test result in the past 48 hours – and have [reported the result](#) (this pass lasts for 48 hours after the result)
- if you have had a positive PCR test result within the past six months, and have finished self-isolating (this pass lasts for 180 days after the result)

Digital Version: You can get a pass by downloading the NHS App or dialling 119.

Paper Version: You can ask for a letter after you have had your 2nd dose of the vaccine. You may need to wait 5 working days before using the service, so that your record will be up to date. You can get a letter by requesting a COVID Pass letter online or calling 119.

For more information on the COVID Pass, visit [NHS COVID Pass](#)

Information on the COVID-19 Vaccine for Ages 12-15 and 16-17

[If you are 12 to 17](#)

The [Pfizer-BioNTech BNT162b2 vaccine](#) is the only vaccine authorised for children aged 12 to 17 years in the UK.

[Will the Human Papillomavirus \(HPV\) vaccine be delayed as a result of this vaccine?](#)

No, there is no reason to delay. You can have Covid-19 vaccine and the HPV vaccine. It's very important to have the HPV vaccine.

[Why are 12-15 year olds being asked to have the COVID-19 vaccine as I thought the number of young people getting COVID was low?](#)

When enough people get vaccinated, it's harder for a disease to spread to those who can't have vaccines. Getting vaccinated protects not only protect you but also your family, friends, and community and It's much safer for your immune system to learn to fight illnesses through vaccination than by catching and treating them.

Has the Covid-19 vaccine been advised for 12-15 year old children?

The Chief Medical Officers have recommended that the offer of covid-19 vaccination be extended to all young people aged 12 to 15.

The Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advised that for children and young people aged 12-15 who do not have underlying health conditions, the individual health benefits from vaccination are slightly greater than the potential known harms, but that the margin of benefit, is considered too small for them to recommend a universal programme of vaccination.

Accepting this advice, UK Chief Medical Officers looked at wider public health benefits and risks of universal vaccination in this age group to determine if this shifts the risk-benefit either way. Of these, the most important in this age group was impact on education

The guidance at present is for healthy 12-15 year olds (as well as healthy 16 & 17 year olds) to have one dose of the Covid vaccine. This is because the greatest benefit is seen after the first dose. As ever, this will be kept under review as the vaccination programme continues.

Why is there a drive to vaccinate children?

Research has shown the vaccines help reduce your risk of getting seriously ill or dying from COVID-19, reduce your risk of catching or spreading COVID-19 and protect you against COVID-19 variants. Young people are also at risk of developing [Long Covid](#), so it is just as important for them to have the protection of a vaccine. We continue to work with those hesitant in our borough to increase uptake.

My child is in the 12-15 year old eligible category but has not been contacted, what should I do? If a child is eligible, their parent or carer would have been contacted before 23rd August by a local NHS service such as a GP or hospital and offered the opportunity to book an appointment. Bookings started from 23rd August. You can also walk in to a local vaccination site that is offering vaccines for children aged 12-15.

If a parent or guardian thinks that their child is eligible but has not been contacted, they should contact their GP.

What if my child has not turned 12 yet?

School based immunisation teams will only vaccinate children aged 12 and above in line with government guidance. We are putting in place a process for other settings including GPs and mass vaccination sites to provide vaccinations to healthy 12-15 year olds. There will continue to be provision for those aged 12 and over in the coming months.

How are children supported after the vaccine in school?

Like any other vaccination programme, nurses are very experienced and will take care of the children. Children would be required to wait for 15 minutes in a designated waiting area, following the vaccination. Following this period, we would expect children to return to lessons. They will not be returned to class until the team are certain they have recovered.

Can a parent attend the school to support their child getting vaccinated, if they are anxious?

We aren't encouraging parents to attend with their children, but if there were exceptional circumstances, then it could be considered. The team are flexible, and we want to do our best. Please let the headteacher know if this is something that needs to be considered. 12-15 year olds can walk in to community vaccination centres across South West London with their parents.

Do those aged 12-15 have to be accompanied by a parent or carer?

We have well established protocols in place to support the vaccination of young people who attend with or without a guardian. Our vaccinators will discuss this with you when you visit one of our vaccination sites.

Why are young people only having one dose when adults are having two or three?

The guidance at present is for healthy 12-15 year olds to have one dose of the Covid vaccine. This is because the greatest benefit is seen after the first dose. As ever, this will be kept under review as the vaccination programme continues. Young people aged 16 and 17 are being offered a 2nd dose of the vaccine 12 weeks following their 1st dose unless they are at higher risk where they can receive it 8 weeks following the 1st dose.

Is it the decision of the child or the parent or carer for the child to have the vaccine?

All parents or those with parental responsibility are asked for consent and will usually make this decision, jointly with their children. The information leaflet is addressed to the child (as the recipient of the vaccine) and encourages them to discuss the decision about the vaccine with their parents.

In secondary schools, some older children may be sufficiently mature to provide their own consent. This sometimes occurs if a parent has not returned a consent form but the child still wishes to have the vaccine on the day of the session. Every effort will be made to contact the parent to seek their verbal consent. This is a well-established process which is used in other school-based vaccination programmes.

Will healthy 16-17 year olds receive a 2nd dose?

From the 22nd November 2021 16 and 17 year olds can receive a second dose of the COVID-19 Vaccine 12 weeks following their first dose if they are low risk and 8 weeks following their 1st dose if they are high risk.

Parental or guardian consent for 16-17 year olds

16 and 17-year-olds who are considering taking the COVID -19 vaccine will not need a parent or carers consent to do so. Current UK guidance states that at 16 years of age a young person is presumed in law to have the capacity to consent.

Information on the COVID-19 Vaccine for Ages 18 and Over

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.

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

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).