

# COVID-19 vaccine: Frequently asked questions

## **How will patients be invited for a vaccination?**

When it is the right time people will receive an invitation to come forward. For most people this will be in the form of a letter either from their GP or the national booking system; this will include all the information they need, including their NHS number.

We know lots of people will be eager to get protected but we are asking people not to contact the NHS to get an appointment until they get their letter.

## **Is the NHS confident the vaccine is safe?**

Yes. The NHS will not offer any Covid-19 vaccinations to the public until experts have signed off that it is safe to do so. The MHRA, the official UK regulator, have said this vaccine is very safe and highly effective, and we have full confidence in their expert judgement and processes.

As with any medicine, vaccines are highly regulated products. There are checks at every stage in the development and manufacturing process, and continued monitoring once it has been authorised and is being used in the wider population.

## **How long does the vaccine take to become effective?**

The COVID-19 vaccination will reduce the chance of your suffering from COVID-19 disease. You may not be protected until at least seven days after your second dose of the vaccine.

## **Why is it important to get your COVID-19 vaccination?**

If you're a frontline worker in the NHS, you are more likely to be exposed to COVID-19 at work.

Getting your COVID-19 vaccination as soon as you can, should protect you and may help to protect your family and those you care for.

The COVID-19 vaccine should help reduce the rates of serious illness and save lives and will therefore reduce pressure on the NHS and social care services.

## **I am in one of the priority groups, 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. You will be called in as soon as there is

enough vaccine available. 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 between people's homes. Please read [this leaflet](#) by clicking on the link for more information.

### **How does the rollout of the Pfizer vaccine work?**

The vaccine arrives from Belgium and is transported to Public Health England's centres where they will check and assess it. Once Public Health England have done their checks and are satisfied, the vaccine will then be distributed across the country.

The NHS will offer vaccinations using three different models, and of course this isn't just about the Pfizer vaccine as we hope we will have others available soon as well. In the first instance, dozens of NHS trusts are acting as **hospital hubs** where the vaccine can be stored safely and where many in the top priority groups – including the over 80s, care home workers and at-risk NHS staff – will be able to get vaccinated on site. These Trusts will work with their neighbouring hospitals to ensure staff at all 163 are offered a vaccination in a way that works best locally.

To make it as easy as possible for those who are eligible to access a vaccination safely, hundreds of **Local Vaccination Services** have been set up, with more due to start in the coming weeks. These community and primary care-led services will vary based on local and logistical considerations but include GP practices, local authority sourced buildings or other local facilities, as well as roving teams who have started delivering it in some care homes.

When the supply of doses allows, the NHS will also establish **vaccination centres**, where large numbers of people will be able to go and get vaccinated. They will be set up in local venues such as sports stadiums, racecourses, and concert venues that offer the physical space to deal with large numbers of people while maintaining social distancing.

### **Is the vaccine vegan/vegetarian friendly?**

Yes, the Pfizer vaccine does not contain any meat derivatives or porcine products.

If, and when, further vaccines are approved we will publish information about known allergens or ingredients that are important for certain faiths, cultures and beliefs.

### **Who cannot have the vaccine?**

The COVID-19 vaccination is not recommended for women who are pregnant.

People who are suffering from a fever-type illness should also postpone having the vaccine until they have recovered.

### **How effective is the COVID-19 vaccine?**

This is all included in the information published by the MHRA, and Public Health England will also be publishing more resources for patients and professionals. People can be assured the NHS will ensure that they have all the necessary information on those vaccines that are approved by the MHRA before they attend for their vaccination.

### **Is the NHS confident the vaccine will be safe?**

Yes. The NHS would not offer any COVID-19 vaccinations to the public until it is safe to do so. The MHRA, the official UK regulator authorising licensed use of medicines and vaccines by healthcare professionals, has made this decision, and we have full confidence in their expert judgement and processes.

As with any medicine, vaccines are highly regulated products. There are checks at every stage in the development and manufacturing process.

### **What is the evidence to show the vaccine is safe for BAME communities?**

The phase three study of the Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine demonstrated a vaccine efficacy of 95%, with consistent efficacy across age, gender and ethnicity. Overall, among the participants who received the COVID-19 vaccine 82.1% were White, 9.6% were Black or African American, 26.1% were Hispanic/Latino, 4.3% were Asian and 0.7% were Native American/Alaskan.

### **I'm currently ill with COVID-19, can I get the vaccine?**

People currently unwell and experiencing COVID-19 symptoms should not receive the COVID-19 vaccine until they have recovered.

### **Do people who have already had COVID-19 get vaccinated?**

Yes, they should get vaccinated. 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 when it is their time to do so.

## **Are there any known or anticipated side effects?**

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. Most of these are mild and short-term, and not everyone gets them. Even if you do have symptoms after the first dose, you still need to have the second dose. You may not be protected until at least seven days after your second dose of the vaccine.

Very common side effects include:

- Having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection. This tends to be worst around 1-2 days after the vaccine
- Feeling tired
- Headache
- General aches, or mild flu like symptoms

As with all vaccines, appropriate treatment and care will be available in case of a rare anaphylactic event following administration.

## **How many doses of the vaccine will be required and when?**

You are required to have two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. You may not be protected until at least seven days after your second dose of vaccine.

## **I have had my flu vaccine, do I need the COVID-19 vaccine as well?**

The flu vaccine does not protect you from COVID-19. As you are eligible for both vaccines you should have them both, but normally separated by at least a week.

## **Will the COVID-19 vaccine protect me from flu?**

No, the COVID-19 vaccine will not protect you against the flu. If you have been offered a flu vaccine, please try to have this as soon as possible to help protect you, your family and patients from flu this winter.