

An illustration of a diverse family of five people: a man in a blue lab coat and white cap, a woman in a green dress and blue headscarf holding a baby, an older man in a yellow shirt, and a woman in a blue headscarf. A young boy in a yellow shirt is in the foreground with a bandage on his arm. The background features stylized blue hills, a syringe, and virus particles.

Vaccinations – know the facts

What are vaccinations?

Vaccinations are medicines given by injection or nasal spray that help reduce symptoms of illness, reduce the chance of developing infectious diseases and prevent serious health complications. They are sometimes called immunisations.

Getting vaccinated helps protect the people around us and our wider community as it helps stop diseases spreading.

What are the benefits of being vaccinated?

Vaccines offer the best protection against diseases and illnesses. When the majority of people are vaccinated, diseases have nowhere to go and we see very few cases. Some illnesses are completely eliminated. When people stop taking vaccines, we see disease rates increase and illnesses spread.

Being vaccinated not only protects you and those close to you, but our wider community.

When do we have them?

There are a number of vaccinations offered by the NHS over the course of a lifetime.

First vaccinations are given to babies at 8 weeks old, followed by vaccinations at 1 year-old, around 4 years-old and throughout primary and secondary school. These vaccinations give protection to children as they grow and for the rest of their lives.

Other vaccinations become available to adults and older people. There are also vaccines that you may need for travel to other countries.

Flu vaccination is offered annually and COVID-19 vaccination usually twice a year to some people who are most at-risk of becoming very ill.

What does Islam say?

Islam promotes the idea that the rights upon us extend to the people around us. The Prophetic teachings encourage us to consider the implications of our actions. Being vaccinated help stop diseases spreading in our community and protects others.

Are pork products in vaccines?

Some vaccines contain pork gelatine, which is broken down into tiny molecules called peptides. This is used as a stabiliser to keep the vaccine safe and effective during storage.

The usual flu nasal spray for children and MMR vaccines both contain pork gelatine, but there are versions that don't. We can request the flu and MMR vaccines that **don't** contain pork gelatine.

We can choose to have vaccines without pork gelatine for us and our children.

What about side effects?

Not everyone experiences side effects from vaccinations, but some people have a sore arm, stuffy nose or minor cold-like symptoms after being vaccinated. Vaccinations do not make you ill and serious side effects are very rare and unusual. Having minor side effects like a blocked nose is much better than becoming extremely ill with flu, COVID-19 or measles.

Millions of people are vaccinated world-wide every day with no issues.

Is it safe to have vaccinations during pregnancy?

Yes, it is absolutely safe and recommended to have vaccinations in pregnancy. When we are vaccinated during pregnancy we pass on protection to our unborn babies, which lasts for the first few weeks of their life after birth. Being vaccinated in pregnancy is one of the best things you can do to protect your baby's health.

What about all the bad things about vaccines on the internet?

Unfortunately, the internet has become a place where a lot of false information about vaccines is shared by a few people and then spreads widely to lots of people.

This is very dangerous as the claims made in much of the information are not true and can put people off being vaccinated. If people aren't vaccinated, they are at-risk of becoming seriously ill. It also puts our wider community at risk of diseases spreading.

Rumours and misinformation spread offline too and you may hear people in our community talk against vaccinations. People may have been influenced by false information they have read online. Please do your own research from trusted NHS sources to make an informed choice for yourself and your family.

Vaccinations have been given for hundreds of years and are very safe. Please don't believe everything you read online from untrusted or unverified sources.

You should always get your information from a trusted NHS source or the NHS website www.nhs.uk. There is also lots of good information on the British Islamic Medical Association website www.britishIAM.org

Speak to your doctor, nurse or midwife if you have any concerns.

How were COVID-19 vaccinations developed so quickly?

The main reason was that finding an effective vaccine was a worldwide priority. Funding was made available very quickly and scientists across the world have worked together to develop the vaccines, which has meant they were able to complete years of work in months.

All the standard safety procedures were followed during clinical trials on vaccines for COVID-19 and the rigorous regulatory processes have been fully completed as for any other vaccine or medicine.

No medicine can ever be completely risk-free or 100% effective, however, strong licencing processes and safety tests ensure that the health benefits greatly outweigh any risks.

Why is it important for people in our community to get vaccinated?

Statistics show that fewer people from Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Muslim communities are vaccinated compared to other ethnic groups. This leaves our community at greater risk of catching diseases and illnesses.

It is important to ensure that we have equal access to vaccinations and take them up when they are offered. We all have a part to play in protecting our communities from illness and disease.

