

NHS COVID-19 and flu Vaccination Q&As to support conversations with the public

V48

Document information

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This document is designed to support staff working on the NHS COVID-19 Vaccination Deployment Programme who are holding conversations with the public, such as call centre staff. It covers questions that may be asked. It is regularly reviewed and updated when there are changes to guidance.

Document key

Green text: Notes to call agents for additional information.

Red text: Instructions for call agents to follow.

Changes in this version

Version	Changes	Reason	Date	Author
48	<ul style="list-style-type: none">New QAs to cover seasonal COVID-19 and flu vaccinations and wider review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To bring all information up to date for seasonal campaign launch	18/09/23	Beth Davies

Home

[Eligibility: Who can get a COVID-19 vaccine](#)

[Arranging vaccinations: Invitations](#)

[Arranging vaccinations: Consent](#)

[About the vaccine: Allergies & alternatives](#)

[Eligibility: Children aged 6 months to 4 years](#)

[Arranging vaccinations: Bookings](#)

[About seasonal vaccinations](#)

[Recording & Data: Personal Data & GP records](#)

[Eligibility: Flu vaccinations](#)

[Arranging Vaccinations: Walk-ins](#)

[About the vaccine: Vaccine types](#)

[Recording and data: Fraud, scams & media](#)

[Eligibility: Increased risk groups](#)

[Arranging vaccinations: Availability](#)

[About the vaccine: Safety & effectiveness](#)

[Recording & data: VDRS and overseas service](#)

[Eligibility: Citizenship queries](#)

[Arranging vaccinations: Reasonable adjustments](#)

[About the vaccine: Side effects](#)

[Recording and data: Complaints and contact preferences](#)

[Eligibility: Anti-viral treatments](#)

[Arranging Vaccinations: Home visits](#)

[About the vaccine: Health queries](#)

Eligibility: Who can get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Who can get a seasonal COVID-19 vaccine this autumn/winter?

You may be eligible if you are:

- aged 65 years and over (by 31 March 2024)
- aged 6 months to 64 years and at increased risk due to a health condition or medical treatment
- pregnant
- a frontline health or social care worker
- aged 12 to 64 years and live with someone who has a weakened immune system
- aged 16 to 64 years and a paid or unpaid carer
- a resident or staff in a care home for older adults.

If you have never been vaccinated before, or if you only had one dose, you can still get your seasonal vaccination. You only need one COVID-19 vaccination during the seasonal period (if you are aged 5 or over). It must be at least 3 months (91 days) since your last COVID-19 vaccination.

Who else can get a COVID-19 vaccine?

- Children aged 6 months to 4 years old who are at increased risk can get a 1st and 2nd dose, followed by a seasonal dose 91 days later.
- If you have had a stem cell transplant or CAR-T therapy, your specialist may advise you that you need re-vaccination against COVID-19. Speak to your specialist or GP for advice.

Can I get a COVID-19 vaccine for travel or other purposes?

If you are not in an eligible group, it is not currently possible to access COVID-19 vaccination on the NHS or privately in England.

Eligibility: Children aged 6 months to 4 years

[Home](#)

Why is it important that my child is vaccinated against COVID-19?

While for most young children, COVID-19 is mild, the JCVI has advised that children with certain medical conditions are at increased risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19. They can become very unwell and may need to go to hospital if they get the infection. These children should therefore be offered vaccination to help protect them from COVID-19.

How many COVID-19 vaccines will my child receive?

Children aged 6 months to 4 years old who are at increased risk from severe COVID-19 will be offered two vaccinations. When available, they can also have a seasonal vaccination from 3 months (91 days) after their second vaccination.

If your child is not at increased risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19, they are not eligible for these vaccinations.

Which vaccine will my child get?

Children aged 6 months to 4 years will be offered two 3-microgram doses of the Comirnaty vaccine, which is a smaller dose compared to older children. Like all COVID-19 vaccines authorised for use by the NHS it has met strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness. For more information, go to [nhs.uk/covidvaccine](https://www.nhs.uk/covidvaccine).

How can I get a COVID-19 vaccine for my child aged 6 months to 4 years old?

Local NHS services (such as your GP surgery) should invite eligible children for their vaccinations and arrange their appointments. If you think your child is eligible because they are at increased risk from severe COVID-19, please contact their GP surgery to arrange a vaccination.

Eligibility: Flu vaccinations

Who can get a seasonal flu vaccination?

The flu vaccine is offered to people most at risk of getting seriously ill from flu or who are most likely to pass flu to other people at risk. The following people are eligible for the free flu vaccine this season:

- all children aged 2 or 3 years on 31 August 2023
- all school aged children (from Reception to Year 11)
- those aged 6 months of age upwards in a clinical risk group
- people that are pregnant
- those aged 65 years and over (by 31 March 2024)
- those in long-stay residential care homes
- carers in receipt of a carer's allowance, or who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person
- those that live with someone who is more likely to get infections (such as someone living with HIV, has had a transplant or is having certain treatments for cancer, lupus or rheumatoid arthritis)
- frontline workers in a social care setting that do not have access to occupational health

Who can get both seasonal vaccines?

You may be able to get both seasonal vaccines if you are aged 65 and over, pregnant, an eligible care home resident, have certain health conditions, are frontline health or social care staff, an unpaid carer or live with someone who has a weakened immune systems.

Call agent: both seasonal vaccinations are available now, but 5-17s should wait to be invited before organising a COVID-19 vaccination.

Eligibility: Increased risk groups 1/2

Which health conditions make me eligible for a seasonal COVID-19 vaccination?

- respiratory conditions, i.e. poorly controlled asthma, chronic pulmonary disease, including emphysema and bronchitis, cystic fibrosis
- diabetes
- heart conditions such as coronary heart disease or heart failure
- being very overweight – a BMI of 40 or above
- chronic kidney disease or liver disease, such as hepatitis
- neurological conditions, i.e. Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS) or cerebral palsy
- a learning disability
- those with a severe mental illness
- problems with your spleen, e.g. sickle cell
- a weakened immune system as the result of conditions (e.g. HIV infection at all stages; a blood cancer; an organ, bone marrow or stem cell transplant; genetic disorders affecting the immune system; treatment such as steroid medicine, biological therapy, chemotherapy or radiotherapy; long-term immunosuppressive treatment for conditions including systemic lupus erythematosus, rheumatoid arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease, scleroderma and psoriasis).

If you are unsure, you should speak to your pharmacist, GP or specialist for advice.

Call agent: Do not enter into clinical discussion.

Eligibility: Increased risk groups 2/2

Who is defined as a household contact of a person with a weakened immune system?

“Individuals who expect to share living accommodation on most days... And therefore, for whom continuing close contact is unavoidable.” The advice covers individuals aged **12** and over. This does not include frequent visitors and other non-carers.

Which health conditions make me eligible for a flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine is offered to anyone with a serious health condition, including:

- respiratory conditions, i.e. asthma, chronic pulmonary disease, including emphysema and bronchitis, cystic fibrosis
- diabetes
- heart conditions such as coronary heart disease or heart failure
- being very overweight – a BMI of 40 or above
- chronic kidney disease
- liver disease, such as hepatitis
- neurological conditions, i.e. Parkinson’s disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS) or cerebral palsy
- a learning disability
- problems with your spleen, e.g. sickle cell
- a weakened immune system as the result of conditions i.e. HIV and AIDs or taking steroids or chemotherapy

If you have a condition that is not included in the list, you can speak to your GP who can offer a flu vaccine if they think you are at risk of serious complications from catching flu.

Eligibility: Citizenship queries

I am not a British citizen. Can I get a COVID-19 vaccine in England?

If you are in an eligible group, you will be able to get your next vaccine in England.

You are encouraged to register with a GP surgery in England, however this is not essential. Anyone in England can register with a GP. You do not need proof of identity or immigration status. This information will not be passed on to the Home Office. For more information on how to register with a GP, please visit nhs.uk/register.

Being registered with a GP surgery will enable you to book an appointment through the national booking service when vaccines are available. Otherwise, you can get vaccinated at a walk-in site without being registered with a GP or having an NHS number. Walk-in site locations can be found at nhs.uk/vaccine-walk-in. Information on vaccination in the UK is available in different languages at gov.uk/government/publications/immunisation-information-for-migrants.

Call agent: For eligibility, see 'Who can get a COVID-19 vaccine?' slide

I'm in Wales/Scotland/Ireland. Can I get a vaccine?

This service is for people who are registered with a GP surgery in England only.

For information on vaccination in other parts of the UK, go to:

- [Scotland – NHS Inform: coronavirus vaccination](#)
- [Wales – Public Health Wales: coronavirus vaccination](#)
- [Northern Ireland – Public Health Agency: coronavirus vaccination](#)

Eligibility: Anti-viral treatments

How can I get treatment if I am eligible?

Local NHS organisations are responsible for arranging COVID-19 treatments. The way you get treatment may depend on where you live. [Your local integrated care board \(ICB\)](#) can give you more information. Go to www.nhs.uk/coronavirustreatments for the latest information about accessing COVID treatments in your area and patient information leaflets.

If you need information in easy read format or in a different language, you can read [information about treatments for COVID-19 on the NHS England website](#).

Call agent: Advise caller to re-dial and select option 4 for the Test and Trace service.

Arranging vaccinations: Invitations 1/2

How will I be invited?

If your NHS record suggests you may be eligible for a vaccination, you may be invited to get your seasonal vaccines by the NHS nationally or by your GP practice through a letter, text, email or NHS App message. If you receive an invitation from the NHS and have already been vaccinated or you have already arranged your vaccinations, do not worry. Sometimes there is a delay in the information flowing through.

How do you identify who to invite?

The government decide which groups will be eligible for free vaccines on the NHS. Their decision is based on the independent advice of clinical experts in the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) who review the latest clinical evidence and data. NHS England then uses GP surgery and hospital records to invite people who may be eligible for a vaccination.

I don't think I'm eligible. Why have I received an invitation?

NHS England uses GP surgery and hospital records to decide who is eligible for a vaccination. For a list of eligible health conditions or treatments, go to [nhs.uk/get-covid-vaccine](https://www.nhs.uk/get-covid-vaccine) or [nhs.uk/flujab](https://www.nhs.uk/flujab). Unfortunately, some people may be incorrectly identified because information on their medical record is inaccurate or out-of-date. You may receive further reminders if your NHS record suggests you are eligible.

Call agent: See ['How can I find out what is on my medical record?'](#) if the caller asks about updating their record.

Arranging vaccinations: Invitations 2/2

Why has the NHS sent me more than one invitation?

The national vaccination programme sends reminders to ensure that people continue to have opportunities to arrange vaccinations they are eligible for. Some people may also receive invitations from local NHS services, such as their GP surgery.

I've already been vaccinated or arranged my vaccination appointment. Why have I been invited again?

In a small number of cases, you might still receive an invitation after making a booking or recently being vaccinated. There can sometimes be a lag between being vaccinated and your record being updated. If you have already been vaccinated or have a vaccination booked, please ignore the message – there is nothing you need to do.

A letter came to my home for someone else. What should I do?

If you receive a letter for someone who doesn't live at your address anymore, please return to sender in the usual way so that our records can be updated. Tick the box on the envelope and return to sender by putting the envelope into a letterbox.

If the original envelope has been lost, please use a new envelope.

You do not need to add a stamp.

Arranging vaccinations: Bookings 1/2

How can I get my seasonal COVID-19 vaccination?

- Book using the NHS App or online at nhs.uk/book-covid (from October, you may be asked if you want a flu vaccination at the same appointment)
- Find a walk-in COVID-19 vaccination site at nhs.uk/vaccine-walk-in
- Book through a local NHS service, such as a GP surgery
- Through your care home

How can I get my seasonal flu vaccination?

To get your adult flu vaccination, you can contact your GP practice or find your nearest pharmacy (18+ only) offering the vaccine at www.nhs.uk/flu-pharmacy. In some areas, midwives can give the flu vaccine at the antenatal clinic. From October, some pharmacies are offering appointments online or via the NHS App. To arrange your child's flu vaccination:

- If your child is aged 2 or 3 years old or if they are aged 6 months to 2 years with certain health conditions, you can book a flu vaccination appointment at their GP practice.
- If your child is of school age, you do not need to book. They will be vaccinated in schools or community clinics through the school aged immunisation service.

Can I have the flu and COVID-19 vaccines together?

For most people, it is fine to have the flu and COVID-19 vaccines at the same time. You may be offered the chance to book both vaccinations in a single visit. If this is not possible, get each vaccine as soon as you can.

Call agent: both seasonal vaccinations are available now, but 5-17s should wait to be invited before organising a COVID-19 vaccination.

Arranging vaccinations: Bookings 2/2

Who can book using the National Booking Service (NBS)?

You need to be registered with a GP surgery in England to use this service. You can use this service to book a dose of the COVID-19 vaccine if you or your child are aged 5 or over. It is not possible to book appointments for children aged 6 months to 4 years through the National Booking Service, and children in this age group cannot be vaccinated at a walk-in vaccination site.

Where can I get vaccinated?

- COVID-19 vaccinations may take place at a community pharmacy or vaccination centre. Some GP surgeries will offer vaccines, but not all of them.
- You can get your flu vaccine through your GP practice or a community pharmacy (18+ only). Pregnant women can also get their flu vaccine through their maternity service. Eligible children under 5 will get their flu vaccine through their GP and school age children will be offered their flu vaccine through their school age vaccination services, so will either get the vaccine in school or at a community clinic.
- Residents in care homes will be offered their vaccines in their care home.
- Health and social care staff will be offered their vaccines through their employer.

When can I book my child's seasonal vaccinations?

- If your child is aged 2-3 years or aged 6 months – 17 years and in a clinical at risk group, we encourage you to book as soon as the flu vaccine becomes available from September to ensure they're protected ahead of winter and to help prevent the spread of the virus.
- Children aged 5 and over that are eligible for the seasonal COVID-19 vaccine will be able to get the vaccine later in the season.

Call agent: see ['Why are there no COVID-19 vaccination appointments for under 18s?'](#)

Arranging vaccinations: Walk-ins

Can I go to a COVID-19 walk-in site?

Find your nearest COVID-19 walk-in site at nhs.uk/vaccine-walk-in. You do not need to make an appointment, but you should check which age groups they are currently offering vaccines to before attending.

You can go to a walk-in site with any eligible friends or family members and get vaccinated together.

If you can't find a convenient walk-in location, you can alternatively look to pre-book.

I have an appointment but instead went to a walk-in site. Do I need to cancel my booked appointment?

Yes, please cancel any existing booked appointments if you had a vaccination at a walk-in site instead.

Arranging vaccinations: Availability

I can't arrange a convenient appointment. What should I do?

More appointments are added every day, so continue to check back if you cannot find a convenient appointment at first.

GP practices and pharmacies get the vaccines in batches to make sure that they are widely available. If you are eligible and cannot get an appointment, ask if you can book an appointment for when more vaccines are delivered.

Please note, this booking service only has access to the same appointments that are available online.

Why are there no COVID-19 vaccination appointments for under 18s?

COVID vaccination for those aged under 18 years will begin later in the season. Under 18s may wish to wait to receive an invitation before trying to make a booking or attending a walk-in site. You (or your child aged 5-17) will be prompted when vaccination appointments are available for this age group.

Call agent: 5-11 vaccine appointments will not available until early October; 12-17s may be able to be vaccinated from 25 September.

When is my last chance to get vaccinated?

The final date to book a COVID-19 vaccine is 15 December. The flu vaccine is available up until the end of March.

Arranging vaccinations: Reasonable adjustments

What adjustments are available to support people with additional needs attending vaccination appointments?

If you have any access needs (e.g. step-free or wheelchair access), we can try and help you find a suitable vaccination site.

If you need any other reasonable adjustments at your appointment, please let a member of staff know on arrival. We are unable to arrange reasonable adjustments in advance so make sure you tell staff what your additional needs are on the day.

Staff will try to meet your needs wherever possible. You can also bring someone who can support you, like a family member or your carer.

Where can I get easy read information about seasonal vaccines?

For easy read information about the flu vaccine go to www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-leaflet-for-people-with-learning-disability.

For an easy read copy of the national invitation for seasonal vaccinations, go to www.england.nhs.uk/seasonal-invites.

Why haven't I received an easy read invitation?

To help us keep people safe during the COVID global health emergency, the law was relaxed. This allowed us to contact people who had a learning disability in an easy read format. Because we are no longer in a global health emergency, there are more restrictions on how we use your information. We cannot use GP Learning Disability Registers to identify who to send easy read communications to. We are working on a solution for the future to allow us to send hard copy easy read invitations to people who would prefer them. For now, we are making an easy read letter available online in all national invitations. Go to www.england.nhs.uk/seasonal-invites.

Arranging vaccinations: Home visits

I need a home visit. Can you help?

If you're due a vaccination and usually get your care at home, please contact your GP surgery to arrange a home visit with a local NHS service in the first instance.

Call agent: Confirm that the caller has already tried to organise a home visit through their GP practice first.

Your Integrated Care Board (ICB – local NHS commissioning service) can help you to arrange a vaccination appointment in your area if your GP surgery has advised that they cannot organise this for you. Please contact your ICB using the contact details available at www.england.nhs.uk/local-covid-19-vaccination-contacts/.

Call agent: If the caller can't get online, provide them with the contact details of the local ICB from the web page. Ask where the citizen is based (town, county, region) to correctly identify their ICB. There is a map of ICBs available on the web page. If needed, ask the caller for their postcode and use the post-code checker spreadsheet to confirm their ICB. There are email addresses for all ICBs, and some also have a telephone number. Carefully spell out e-mail addresses to ensure the citizen has captured correctly. Close the call and log the call as (Housebound needs local service - Referred for support/ Home Visit Advice).

Arranging vaccinations: Consent

Will my consent be sought for my child to get vaccinated?

Consent is an important part of vaccination. At the appointment, you and your child will be given the opportunity to ask questions. You can view a consent form online to help your discussion at bit.ly/CYP-COVID-consent. Consent will normally be obtained on the day. It is not necessary to print and sign the form in advance. So that we can get your consent more easily, we strongly advise you to accompany your child to the appointment.

Can my child be vaccinated without my consent?

Your child may have the right to get vaccinated without your consent. These are very unusual circumstances and are based on an individual assessment. This can only be determined by the healthcare professional at the time. We would prefer you to come to a joint decision with your child. Further information on consent is available at nhs.uk/conditions/consent-to-treatment/children.

About seasonal vaccinations

Why should I get seasonal COVID-19 and flu vaccinations?

Having your COVID-19 and flu vaccinations will reduce your risk of serious illness and help you recover more quickly if you catch the viruses. Seasonal vaccinations have proven safety records. They give you better protection than any immunity gained from previous infections. Flu and COVID-19 spread more easily in winter so even if you've been vaccinated before, it's important you get the protection you need because viruses change, and protection fades over time.

While flu and COVID-19 can be unpleasant, for some, the viruses can be very dangerous and even life threatening, particularly people with certain health conditions, older people and pregnant women. For them, it can increase the risk of developing more serious illnesses such as bronchitis and pneumonia or can make existing conditions worse. Every winter, thousands die from flu and people can still get very ill or die from COVID-19. For more information, go to [nhs.uk/seasonalvaccinations](https://www.nhs.uk/seasonalvaccinations).

Why have I been invited for seasonal vaccinations earlier this year?

The NHS has brought forward the delivery of seasonal vaccinations following the latest expert guidance on the new COVID variant (BA.2.86). There is currently insufficient data to assess the severity compared to other variants. The NHS is taking pre-emptive measures to vaccinate people earlier to help stop the spread and protect those most at risk from this variant. We are inviting eligible people to come forward for both flu and COVID-19 vaccines sooner as, if you get both viruses at the same time, the symptoms are likely to be more serious.

Why do I need to have further doses of the COVID-19 vaccine?

The COVID-19 vaccine is given to top up the protection in those at higher risk from severe COVID-19 illness to help prevent people being hospitalised or dying from COVID-19 during colder months. During the pandemic, COVID-19 disproportionately affected those in older age groups, residents in care homes for older adults, and those with certain underlying health conditions, particularly those with weakened immune systems. If you are in an eligible group, you are encouraged to 'top up' your protection.

About the vaccine: Vaccine types 1/3

Which COVID-19 vaccine will I get?

There are several different COVID-19 vaccines in use in the UK. They have all met strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness. Most people can have any of the COVID-19 vaccines. You cannot choose which vaccine you have. Some people are only offered certain vaccines, for example:

- if you're pregnant
- if you're under 18 years old
- in very rare cases if you've had a severe allergic reaction to one of the common vaccines you may be referred to a specialist clinic for your vaccination or offered an alternative COVID-19 vaccine.

Children under 12 will be given smaller doses. In line with the advice of scientists, children aged 5 to 12 will receive Comirnaty 10 (XBB.1.5).

What flu vaccine will I be given?

For adults, there are several types of flu vaccine depending upon your age.

- adults are offered an injectable vaccine – there are different types, including low-egg and egg-free ones
- adults aged 65 years and over – the most common flu vaccine contains an extra ingredient to help your immune system make a stronger response to the vaccine, called an adjuvanted vaccine.

Most children over the age of 2 are offered a nasal spray vaccine given as a quick and painless spray up the nose. Under 2s and a small number of children who cannot have the nasal spray and are offered protection through an injected vaccine instead.

About the vaccine: Vaccine types 2/3

Which COVID-19 vaccines are approved for use?

Among others, COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in the UK include:

- Moderna (Spikevax)
- Pfizer/BioNTech (Comirnaty)
- Sanofi and GSK (VidPrevtyn Beta)

COVID-19 vaccines authorised for use by the NHS are effective, provide a strong booster response and have good safety record. For the latest information, go to nhs.uk/covidvaccine.

Can I choose which vaccine I have?

COVID-19 vaccines authorised for use by the NHS are effective, provide a strong booster response and have good safety record. Usually, you cannot choose which vaccine you have. They have all met strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness. The only exception is for people who, for reasons of faith or ethical dietary considerations, are unable to have certain vaccine types. Alternatives will be made available where clinically appropriate.

Will I need the same type of COVID-19 vaccine as I had before?

No, all COVID-19 vaccines authorised for use by the NHS are effective and provide a strong booster response. When you attend your appointment, the NHS will offer you an appropriate and effective vaccine with a proven safety record.

About the vaccine: Vaccine types 3/3

Do the vaccines contain animal products?

The Sanofi and GSK (VidPrevtyn Beta) COVID-19 vaccine contains an oil derived from sharks. The other COVID-19 vaccines offered by the NHS do not contain animal products, including egg. Vaccines only contain essential ingredients. For the latest information about COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in the UK, including their ingredients, go to www.nhs.uk/covidvaccine. The flu nasal spray contains small traces of porcine gelatine. For those who may not accept the use of porcine gelatine in medicines, an injectable vaccine is available that does not contain porcine-derived ingredients. You can read the UKHSA animal products and vaccines leaflet at www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-human-and-animal-products-in-vaccines.

Have the vaccines been tested on animals?

Laws and regulatory agencies worldwide currently require that all medicines are tested on animals before clinical trials on humans.

What are bivalent vaccines?

Bivalent vaccines are COVID-19 vaccines that target more than one type of COVID-19.

How do vaccines work?

Vaccines teach your immune system how to create antibodies that protect you from diseases. It's usually much safer for your immune system to learn this through vaccination than by catching the diseases and treating them. Once your immune system knows how to fight a disease, it can often protect you.

About the vaccine: Safety and effectiveness 1/2

Is vaccination safe?

The flu and COVID-19 vaccines have a good safety record, and their side effects are generally mild and do not last for more than a few days. Your safety will always come first and there are rigorous safety standards that have to be met through the approval process.

As with any medicine, vaccines are highly regulated products. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), the official UK regulator are globally recognised for requiring the highest standards of safety, quality and effectiveness for medicines and vaccines. There are checks at every stage in the development and manufacturing process.

Like any other vaccine or medicine, the flu and COVID-19 vaccines are being continuously monitored for safety – the effected benefits of the vaccines far outweigh risk in the majority of patients.

How were the COVID-19 vaccines tested?

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. There are checks at every stage in the development and manufacturing process, and continued monitoring once vaccines are authorised and being used in the wider population.

COVID-19 vaccine trials involved thousands of people from a range of backgrounds, including both men and women of all age groups and people from lots of different ethnic backgrounds. They are available on the NHS once they have been thoroughly tested. Patient information leaflets about each of the vaccines are available online. Go to [nhs.uk/covid-vaccine](https://www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccine) for more information.

About the vaccine: Safety and effectiveness 2/2

[Home](#)

How well do the COVID-19 vaccines work?

All vaccines are classed as highly effective. If you are at increased risk of severe COVID-19, getting a COVID-19 vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and others. Research has shown COVID vaccines have helped to:

- Reduce the risk of getting seriously ill or dying from COVID-19
- Reduce the risk of catching and spreading COVID-19
- Protect against different strains (variants) of COVID-19

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 do I need another vaccine?

Seasonal vaccines are offered because protection fades over time, and viruses change. The vaccines help give you good protection from becoming seriously ill or needing to go to hospital if you catch COVID-19 or flu.

How do I know the COVID-19 vaccine is safe for my child?

The JCVI has reviewed extensive clinical evidence for the safety of giving the COVID-19 vaccine to children in the eligible groups. The JCVI concluded that the benefit of vaccinating children in these groups far outweighs the risks.

If you have any concerns, you can discuss these with the healthcare professional at your child's appointment.

Can I catch COVID-19 from the vaccine?

You cannot catch COVID-19 from the vaccine.

About the vaccine: Side effects 1/2

Are there any side effects from the vaccines?

Flu and COVID-19 vaccines have a good safety record. Most side effects are mild and only last for a day or so, such as:

- A sore arm from the injection
- Feeling tired
- A headache
- General aches, or mild flu-like symptoms

You or your child should rest. You can also take pain relief such as paracetamol to help you feel better. Symptoms following vaccination normally last less than a week. If you experience a high temperature, if your symptoms seem to get worse or if you are concerned, you can call NHS 111. Seek medical advice urgently if you experience chest pain, shortness of breath or feelings of having a fast-beating, fluttering, or pounding heart.

I'm experiencing side effects. What should I do?

I can transfer you to 999 if life is at risk. Otherwise, go to 111.nhs.uk or call 111.

Call agent: If there is a risk to life, transfer to 999 immediately.

How can I report side effects?

You can report suspected side effects of vaccines and medicines through the Yellow Card Scheme:

- online at [Yellow Card Scheme](#)
- by downloading and using the Yellow Card app on Apple or Android
- by calling the Yellow Card scheme on 0800 731 6789 (9am to 5pm)

About the vaccine: Side effects 2/2

Can I give blood after having the COVID-19 vaccine?

Waiting seven days is recommended to ensure donor and donation safety. It also reduces the risk of a donation being discarded if you developed side effects around the time you donated blood. You can donate again provided you are fully recovered from any side effects.

What happens after my COVID-19 vaccination?

Most people will not be asked to wait and you should be able to continue with your usual activities. However, if you are driving or if you have a history of allergic reactions, you may be asked to wait for 15 minutes or until you're sure it's safe.

Research has found it's very rare to have a serious allergic reaction to the vaccine. If this does happen, it usually happens within minutes. The team will be trained to deal with reactions and treat them immediately. You will also be given a leaflet with common side effects that can happen to take with you.

If you have any concerns, you can discuss these with the healthcare professional at your appointment.

About the vaccine: Health queries 1/4

Can I get vaccinated if I've recently had COVID-19 or symptoms?

If you have COVID-19, or think you might, please wait until you've recovered before getting vaccinated. You should also wait if you have a fever or feel particularly unwell with any illness. If you have recently recovered from COVID-19, there is no need to delay getting vaccinated.

Call agent: This advice applies to all ages, including children.

I'm not feeling well. Should I delay vaccination?

If you're unwell, it's better to wait until you've recovered to have your vaccine, but you should try to have it as soon as possible. You should not attend an appointment if you have a fever or think you might be infectious to others.

I'm undergoing treatment. Should I have a vaccination?

Your specialist or GP will be able to advise you on the best time to have the vaccination around your planned treatment.

Should I get the vaccine if I have long COVID?

Yes. The MHRA has looked at this and decided that getting vaccinated is just as important for those who have already had COVID-19 as it is for those who haven't, including those who have mild residual symptoms. If you're suffering significant ongoing complications, your specialist or GP will be able to advise you.

I'm on a blood thinner. Can I still be vaccinated?

If you normally have vaccinations without difficulty, then seasonal flu and COVID vaccines should present no additional problems. If you have any concerns, you can discuss these with the healthcare professional at your appointment.

About the vaccine: Health queries 2/4

[Home](#)

I have a bleeding disorder. Can I still be vaccinated?

If you normally have the flu vaccination without problems, then you should book for COVID-19 vaccination. If you have any concerns, consult with your haematologist or GP prior to vaccination. If you have any concerns, you can discuss these with the healthcare professional at your appointment.

I've had a stem cell transplant or CAR-T therapy. Do I need to be revaccinated?

Yes, if you've had a stem cell transplant or CAR-T therapy, you should be offered COVID-19 vaccination as your protection from previous vaccines may be lost. Your specialist or GP should refer you. They should also complete a template form (known as a patient specific direction) advising on the best time for you to start your vaccination/s following your treatment.

I've had a stem cell transplant or CAR-T therapy. What should I do if my GP/specialist cannot arrange my re-vaccinations?

Your Integrated Care Board can help you to arrange a vaccination appointment in your area if your specialist or GP cannot organise this for you. Please contact your local NHS service using the contact details at www.england.nhs.uk/local-covid-19-vaccination-contacts/.

Call agent: If the caller can't get online, provide them with the contact details of the local ICB from the web page. Ask where the citizen is based (town, county, region) to correctly identify their ICB. There is a map of ICBs available on the web page. If needed, ask the caller for their postcode and use the post-code checker spreadsheet to confirm their ICB. There are email addresses for all ICBs, and some also have a telephone number. Carefully spell out e-mail addresses to ensure the citizen has captured correctly. Close the call and log the call as (Outcome – referred to ICB) or 'Housebound needs local service - Referred for support' if not available.

About the vaccine: Health queries 3/4

Does the vaccine affect fertility?

There is no evidence to suggest that COVID-19 vaccines will affect fertility.

Can I get vaccinated if I'm breastfeeding?

Yes, you can have the COVID-19 vaccine if you're breastfeeding. You can also contact your maternity service or GP surgery for advice.

Should I get the flu and COVID-19 vaccines while I'm pregnant?

Yes, pregnancy increases your risk of becoming seriously ill if you catch COVID-19 or flu. You will be offered a vaccine that is suitable for you. If you have flu or COVID-19 while you're pregnant, it could cause your baby to be born prematurely or have a low birthweight, it increases the need for admission to intensive care for mum and baby and may even lead to stillbirth or death. If you get flu and COVID-19 at the same time, the symptoms are likely to be more serious. Getting your winter vaccines is the safest and most effective way for women to protect themselves and their baby. If you have any concerns, speak to the healthcare professional at your appointment. You can also contact your maternity service or GP surgery for advice about vaccinations during pregnancy.

Can I get the flu and COVID-19 vaccine at the same time whilst pregnant?

It's safe to receive the flu and COVID-19 vaccines at the same time. If this is not possible, we encourage you to get each vaccine as soon as you can. You can also have the vaccines at the same time as the whooping cough vaccine (pertussis vaccine).

Should I avoid pregnancy after vaccination?

You do not need to avoid pregnancy after vaccination. The vaccine cannot give you or your baby COVID-19.

About the vaccine: Health queries 4/4

[Home](#)

I can't take injections in my arm. Should I still book an appointment?

Yes, you should still book an appointment. Tell the healthcare professional at your appointment and they can discuss your options with you.

Can I get vaccinated if I'm taking antibiotics?

Yes, there is no interaction between antibiotics and the COVID-19 vaccine. You should only delay vaccination if you currently have a bad fever or 'febrile' illness, such as the rapid onset of headaches, chills or muscle and joint pains. A cold or low-grade fever are not reasons to postpone getting the vaccine. If you have any concerns, speak to the healthcare professional at your appointment.

Can I get vaccinated if I've had Botox/dermal fillers/cosmetic procedures?

You are advised to get vaccinated regardless of a history of cosmetic injections. Health risks associated with COVID-19 disease outweigh the current known associated risks. There is no specific interval specified between vaccination and cosmetic injections.

Swelling of the face in patients who have had facial cosmetic injections is a rare side effect that is included in the Moderna patient information leaflet. If facial swelling occurs after vaccination, please report it through the Yellow Card scheme. If you have any concerns, speak to the healthcare professional at your appointment.

About the vaccine: Allergies and alternatives 1/2

Is there anyone that shouldn't get the seasonal vaccines?

Almost everybody eligible can have the vaccines, but you should not be vaccinated if you have ever had a serious allergy (eg. anaphylaxis) to any of the flu or COVID-19 vaccines, or any of their ingredients – you should discuss this with your doctor or pharmacist.

If you are allergic to eggs you may not be able to have certain types of flu vaccine – check with your immuniser.

I'm experiencing an allergic reaction. What should I do?

I can transfer you to 999 if life is at risk, otherwise go to 111.nhs.uk online or call 111 immediately if you have an allergic reaction.

Call agent: If there is a risk to life, transfer to 999 immediately.

Should I get vaccinated if I've had an allergic reaction previously?

Alternative vaccines are unlikely to be necessary for those with mild or common allergies following vaccination, such as a rash, wheezing or hives. If you have experienced mild or common allergies following vaccination, but you have previously tolerated an mRNA vaccine, you can continue to have the common types of vaccine.

About the vaccine: Allergies and alternatives 2/2

[Home](#)

Who can get an alternative vaccine?

In rare cases where people have had severe allergic reactions to more common types of vaccine (mRNA vaccines), an alternative vaccine may be offered. This includes those with a previous history of immediate anaphylactic reactions. It is estimated that less than 1% of people will need an alternative vaccine.

Many people who were previously advised to have an AstraZeneca vaccine can safely receive mRNA vaccines and do not need an alternative. This is because advice to have an AstraZeneca vaccine based on allergy history has been reviewed. AstraZeneca is no longer offered by the NHS, in line with Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice.

How can I get an alternative vaccine?

You can discuss your individual circumstances with a medical professional, who will make sure you are offered a vaccine that is suitable for you and explain any risks. If an initial assessment suggests that you cannot have one of the common vaccine types, your GP or vaccination centre should refer you to a specialist clinic, usually a hospital hub. Please be aware upon further clinical assessment, you may be advised that you can safely tolerate an mRNA vaccine. A referral does not guarantee that you will be offered an alternative vaccine.

Your Integrated Care Board can help you to arrange an alternative vaccination appointment if your GP or vaccination centre has been unable to organise this for you. Please contact your local NHS service using the contact details at www.england.nhs.uk/local-covid-19-vaccination-contacts/.

Call agent: If the caller can't get online, provide them with the contact details of the local ICB from the web page. Ask where the citizen is based (town, county, region) to correctly identify their ICB. There is a map of ICBs available on the web page. If needed, ask the caller for their postcode and use the post-code checker spreadsheet to confirm their ICB. There are email addresses for all ICBs, and some also have a telephone number. Carefully spell out e-mail addresses to ensure the citizen has captured correctly. Close the call and log the call as (Outcome – referred to ICB) or 'Housebound needs local service - Referred for support' if not available.

Recording and data: VDRS and overseas vaccinations

I'm unable to get through to the Vaccine Data Resolution Service. Can you help?

The service has now closed and is not handling any new cases. For the latest advice on how to get your vaccination record updated, go to nhs.uk/vdrs.

Why has the Vaccination Data Resolution Service closed?

The Vaccination Data Resolution Service has closed due to decreased demand in the service. We apologise for any inconvenience. For the latest advice on how to get your vaccination record updated, go to nhs.uk/vdrs.

I've had COVID-19 vaccinations outside of England. How can I get my record updated?

The international service has now closed.

You don't need to provide evidence to the NHS of any COVID-19 vaccinations you or your child have had outside of England.

If you become eligible for a further COVID-19 vaccination, the NHS should contact you even if your vaccination record hasn't been updated with COVID-19 vaccinations you had outside of England.

If you need proof of vaccination for travel or for any other purpose, you can use the original documents from the country that provided the vaccination.

Recording and data: Personal data and GP records 1/5

How can I find my NHS number?

If you do not know your NHS number, you can find it at [Find your NHS number - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk). It should also be on your invitation or any letter from the NHS.

I'm in the armed services. How can I find my NHS number?

You can find it at [Find your NHS number - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk). Use the postcode of the DPHC Medical Centre where you are registered. It should also be on your invitation or any letter from the NHS.

Alternatively, you can find your NHS number using:

- MyNavy app for Royal Navy personnel
- MyRAF App for RAF personnel
- Defence Gateway for army personnel.

How do I get an NHS number?

You may already have an NHS number but just don't know it. You can check at: <https://digital.nhs.uk/services/nhs-number>.

If you don't have one, this may be because you aren't registered with a GP. We recommend speaking with your local practice about registering.

Recording and data: Personal data and GP records 2/5

How do I register with a GP?

For information on how to register with a GP, please visit nhs.uk/nhs-services/gps/how-to-register-with-a-gp-surgery.

Find your closest GP surgery or I can advise you: nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-gp. You can usually contact them online or by phone. If you can, you can also visit them in person.

Who can register with a GP?

Anyone in England can register with a GP surgery and see a doctor or nurse for free. You can register with any GP in your local area if they have space for new patients. You do not need to provide proof of identity or immigration status. This applies if you are an asylum seeker, refugee, homeless or an overseas visitor, whether lawfully in the UK or not.

If you are of no fixed abode, you are entitled to register in the area where you are without proof of address. Before you register, contact the GP surgery to explain that you are living or staying temporarily in the vicinity of their practice.

How can I find out what is on my medical record?

You have the right to ask for a copy of any personal/ health information held about you on NHS systems. Please contact your GP surgery in the first instance. If your GP surgery can't help, please get in touch with the NHS England Customer Contact Centre: england.nhs.uk/contact-us

Call agent: Hospital data sources are used to invite people for vaccination, which GP surgeries cannot view.

Recording and data: Personal data and GP records 3/5

How can I update my medical record?

Please contact your GP surgery. You can find your GP surgery contact details by visiting [nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-GP](https://nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-gp).

The names and addresses used to invite people for vaccination are the same as those held at GP surgeries. If these details are incorrect, receptionist staff can update your information. You do not need an appointment with a GP. If you would like your health information to be updated, speak to the practice manager. They should be able to advise you further.

How does the vaccination programme use my personal information?

We use personal information (such as your NHS Number/name/phone number/address/date of birth/health information) recorded in GP records to check eligibility for the vaccine and to invite you to book an appointment.

We use health information to clarify any medical history and ensure you are able to receive the vaccine safely. We only view a limited part of your GP records for the purposes of checking your eligibility. For further information on how we process personal information: nhs.uk/book-a-coronavirus-vaccination/do-you-have-an-nhs-number. Go to section 3 on 'Purposes of the processing' and section 4 on 'Legal basis for processing'.

Can you delete or stop using my personal information from your systems?

You can ask us to stop or limit using any personal information that we hold about you on our systems. However, this is not an absolute right under data protection law, and we may need to continue to use your information. For example, the use of your data to help deliver and monitor public health programmes such as vaccinations is protected by law. To discuss this further, contact your GP surgery.

Recording and data: Personal data and GP records 4/5

How long will you keep my personal information?

All personal details that you provide will be stored safely and securely. Your data will be used to help monitor the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine. We will only keep your personal details/ health information for as long as necessary depending on the purposes. For further information please visit: Records Management Code of Practice for Health and Social Care 2016.

Who is the data controller for this service?

There are two organisations that control the way personal data is collected, processed, stored, transferred and deleted for the purposes of providing a telephony service to make COVID-19 vaccination bookings. The Joint Data Controllers are the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England.

Who is the data protection officer for this service?

Each organisation has appointed their own Data Protection Officer as required under the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018:

Data Protection Officer
Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H0EU
Email: data_protection@dhsc.gov.uk

Data Protection Officer
NHS England
Quarry House, Quarry Hill
Leeds
LS2 7UE
Email: england.dpo@nhs.net

Recording and data: Personal data and GP records 5/5

How do I exercise my data protection rights?

If you wish to exercise any of your data protection rights, contact the Data Protection Officer at NHS England at england.dpo@nhs.net or in writing to the Data Protection Officer at:

NHS England
Quarry House
Quarry Hill
Leeds
LS2 7UE

How is my personal data being handled by the 119 service?

We process your personal data to primarily assist with making a COVID-19 vaccination booking. This is a public health task. We will also process personal data to meet our legal obligations in delivering this service. Personal data will only be shared with those that have a valid 'need to know' reason. Only the part of personal data that is relevant to the function being performed will be shared.

Processing of personal data is completed within the UK and it is stored safely and securely. We will only keep personal data for as long as is needed and will dispose of it appropriately and securely.

More information can be found in the service's Transparency Notice, which is also referred to as a Privacy Notice. They are the same document. It can be accessed via: [gov.uk/government/publications/pandemic-and-health-emergency-response-services/nhs-COVID-19-vaccine-booking-service-transparency-notice](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pandemic-and-health-emergency-response-services/nhs-COVID-19-vaccine-booking-service-transparency-notice).

Recording and data: Fraud, scams & media

How do I know if my invitation is legitimate?

NHS invitations will never ask you for your bank account or card details. NHS invitations will never ask you for your PIN or banking password. The NHS will never arrive unannounced at your home to administer the vaccine. NHS invitations will never ask you to prove your identity by sending copies of personal documents such as your passport, driving licence, bills or payslips. Local NHS services may send invitations for vaccinations, such as your GP surgery. National invitations will come from the following senders:

- SMS message - 'NHSvaccine'
- Email - covid19.email.invitations@notifications.service.gov.uk
- NHS App – COVID Vaccination Team

Call agent: If the caller believes they have been the victim of fraud or identify theft, advise them to report this directly to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040.

Someone used my personal details to book a vaccine. What should I do?

If you believe you have been the victim of fraud or identify theft, you should report this directly to Action Fraud on 0300 1 23 2040.

I've received a call from 0300 561 0240. The caller said it's the NHS and asked me about my COVID vaccination. Is it a scam?

No. Calls from this telephone number are not a scam, these calls come from the NHS Immunisation Management Service.

I'm a journalist. Can I make a media enquiry?

Please send your enquiry directly to nhsengland.media@nhs.net and the national media team will respond in due course.

Call agent: Do not engage the journalist in conversation.

Recording and data: Complaints and contact preferences 1/2

How can I complain about this call?

We are sorry this service has not met your expectations on this occasion. Can I take some more detail about the nature of your complaint please?

Call agent: Follow vaccine booking service 'complaints' process.

How can I complain about my vaccination appointment?

We are sorry this was your experience on this occasion. Can I take some more detail about the nature of your complaint please?

Call agent: Follow vaccine booking service 'complaints' process. If the caller says they would prefer to contact the complaints team directly, advise them to contact england.contactus@nhs.net. No other department details should be given out. If in doubt, discuss with your team leader.

How can I change my contact preferences?

You can change your contact preferences online at nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/choose-your-covid-19-vaccination-invitation-preference.

If you are calling on behalf of someone else, you must confirm that you have their consent to make this change. If you can't get online, we can complete the request on your behalf. I will read the information to you and complete the process using the information you give. You will be sent a security code on email or by SMS, which you will need to provide to us so we can update your preferences.

Recording and data: Complaints and contact preferences 2/2

Why haven't my contact preferences updated?

Please be aware that it can take up to 48 hours for your contact preferences to be updated. You may also be receiving invitations from your local NHS services, so you need to also inform your GP surgery about your contact preferences.

We can help you to re-submit your contact preferences online: nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/choose-your-covid-19-vaccination-invitation-preference

If you have submitted your contact preferences online more than once and these have still not updated, we can submit a form for this to be resolved:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=Hwf2UP67GkCIA2c3SOYp4vE3deZsCcxOvB5uh3XfH9hUQUJIVVRGODRGWDRGNUJNOFZCNzhCUTQyTC4u>

Call agent: Complete the form. If the caller cannot provide an email address, advise them that they will not be updated once resolved. Do not submit the form without the NHS number. See 'How can I find my NHS number?' To close the call, select 'Vaccination contact preference' as the call reason. Choose the appropriate call outcome:

- Vaccination contact preference process – completed
- Vaccination contact preference process – not completed, not enough information
- Vaccination contact preference process – issue raised with NHS Digital