

Vaccines

Essential for your
protection from infection



Vaccination protects you and protects others

Vaccines prevent the spread of infectious diseases. They save millions of lives every year and are the most successful and cost-effective public health measure in the world after clean water. Since vaccines were introduced in the UK, diseases like smallpox and polio that used to kill or disable millions of people have been stamped out.

Today we have vaccines to prevent more than 20 deadly diseases, helping people of all ages in Northern Ireland to live longer, healthier lives.

As vaccines are crucial to the prevention and control of infectious disease outbreaks, they will be vital in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic and will enable society to eventually return to functioning once again as normal. An effective vaccine is the best way to protect the most vulnerable from COVID-19 and will be the biggest breakthrough since the pandemic began, potentially saving many lives.

Now that one of the first COVID-19 vaccines has been approved for use in Northern Ireland it is extremely important that everyone who is eligible takes up the offer of vaccination when invited. As a number of vaccines for COVID-19 are waiting to be approved, the PHA has provided this leaflet to explain why vaccination is essential for our protection.



What is a vaccine and how does it work?

Vaccines prevent disease. They work by training your body's immune system to make antibodies, which are proteins that help fight infection, just as it does naturally when it's exposed to a disease. Your immune system then 'remembers' the disease and quickly destroys it before you become unwell if you are re-exposed in the future.

Most vaccines are given by an injection, but some are given orally (by mouth) or sprayed into the nose.



Why is vaccination important?



Vaccines
save the lives of up to
3 million people
worldwide every year



Vaccination is a safe and effective way to prevent disease and save lives. Today there are vaccines available to protect against at least 20 diseases, such as: diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, influenza and measles. Together, these vaccines save the lives of up to 3 million people worldwide every year.



Are vaccines safe?

All vaccines are rigorously tested before they are approved for use. A vaccine will not be approved if it does not meet very high safety standards. Once approved, a vaccine will continue to be monitored for any possible side effects. It is reassuring to know the safety standards of vaccines have to be higher than those for medication to treat illnesses and the UK has some of the highest safety standards in the world.

Vaccination is safe and most side effects are mild and only last for a day or so. Side effects may include a sore arm or fever.

Some people may experience a serious allergic reaction to a vaccination. However, this is rare but if it does happen, it usually happens within minutes.

Please be assured the person who vaccinates you or your child will be trained to recognise allergic reactions and treat them immediately. With prompt treatment, you or your child will make a good recovery.

It is important to remember you are far more likely to be seriously harmed by the disease than by the vaccine. The benefits of vaccination greatly outweigh the risks, and many more illnesses and deaths would occur without vaccines.

For more on the safety of vaccines visit
www.nidirect.gov.uk/vaccines



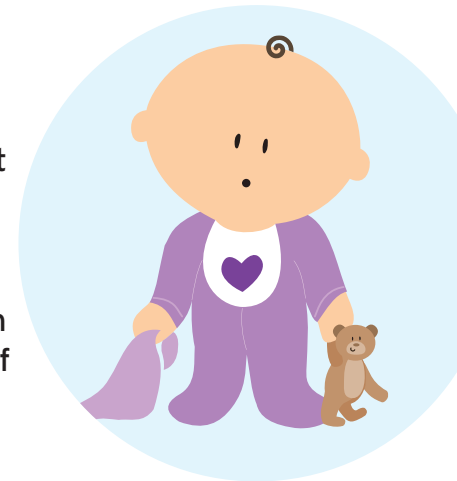
Why should I get vaccinated?

Two important reasons to get vaccinated are:

- to help protect ourselves
- to help protect those around us: our friends, family and wider community.

How do vaccines protect the wider community?

When we get vaccinated, we aren't just protecting ourselves, but also those around us. Some people - like those who are seriously ill or very young babies - may not be able to get certain vaccines, so they depend on the rest of us to get vaccinated and help reduce the spread of disease.



Are there any reasons why I shouldn't get a vaccine?

Some people with certain medical conditions should not get certain vaccines, or should wait before getting them. These conditions can include:

- Chronic illnesses or treatments (like chemotherapy) affecting the immune system;
- Severe and life-threatening allergies to vaccine ingredients, which are very rare;
- If you have severe illness and a high fever on the day of vaccination.



If you're not sure if you or your child should get a particular vaccine, talk to your healthcare provider such as your community pharmacist. They can help you make an informed choice about vaccination for you or your child.



The COVID-19 vaccine

The long-term response to the pandemic requires a safe and effective vaccine to be available to those most at risk of dying or hospitalisation. Many potential vaccines for COVID-19 are being studied and tested. It is very reassuring to know vaccines only reach the public when proven to work and to be safe. The length of time taken to test the vaccine has not been shortened, and the usual safety measures remain in place.

Roll out of the COVID-19 vaccine

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise on which vaccine(s) should be used and provide advice on who should be offered the vaccination first. As large numbers of people from at risk groups are given a vaccine, we should be able to see the impact on infection rates, hospitalisation and deaths. Higher rates of vaccination should in time lead to reassessment of current restrictions and returning to a more normal way of life.

The approved vaccine(s) will be available free of charge from the health service to everyone who is eligible starting with those most at risk. The health service in Northern Ireland is ready to deliver a COVID-19 vaccination programme from mid-December for those prioritised by the JCVI.

We know that the vast majority of people have said they would get a COVID-19 vaccine to protect themselves, their friends and family. However, until large numbers of people have been vaccinated, we need to continue preventing the spread of coronavirus by:



**KEEP
DISTANCE**

keeping our
distance from
others;



**WEAR FACE
COVERING**

wearing a face
covering when
required and;



**WASH
HANDS**

washing our
hands often.

For more information on vaccination speak to your pharmacist, GP or visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/vaccines

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