




COVID-19 vaccination

What to expect



Information for people
who have just had their
COVID-19 vaccination

Find out more at
www.nidirect.gov.uk/covid-vaccine

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Please read the product information leaflet for more details on your vaccine, including possible side effects, by searching Coronavirus Yellow Card.

You can also report suspected side effects on the same website or by downloading the Yellow Card app.



coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk

People who are most at risk from the complications of COVID-19 are being offered the COVID-19 vaccination.

This leaflet tells you what to expect after you have had your vaccination. If you need a second dose of vaccine, make sure you know the date of your next appointment.

Following detailed review of large studies of safety and effectiveness, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has now approved several different types of COVID-19 vaccines for use in the UK.

An independent group of experts has recommended that these vaccines are offered to those at risk of catching the infection and suffering serious complications.

Now that more vaccine has become available, we are offering protection to all adults in order of risk.

What are the 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. Although you may get some protection from the first dose, having the full recommended course will give you the best protection against the virus.

Very common side effects in the first day or two include:

- having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection
- feeling tired
- headache, aches and chills

You may also have flu like symptoms with episodes of shivering and shaking for a day or two. However, a high temperature* could also indicate that you have COVID-19 or another infection (see advice on page 6). You can rest and take the normal dose of paracetamol (follow the advice in the packaging) to help make you feel better.

**If you are on chemotherapy and have a high temperature, contact your local cancer care unit.*

An uncommon side effect is swollen glands in the armpit or neck on the same side as the arm where you had the vaccine. This can last for around 10 days, but if it lasts longer see your doctor. If you are due for a mammogram in the few weeks after the vaccine, then you should mention that when you attend.

What should I do if I am concerned about my symptoms?

These symptoms normally last less than a week. If your symptoms seem to get worse or if you are concerned, call NHS 111. If you do seek advice from a doctor or nurse, make sure you tell them about your vaccination (show them the vaccination card) so that they can assess you properly. You can also report suspected side effects of vaccines and medicines through the Yellow Card scheme. You can do this online by searching Coronavirus Yellow Card or by downloading the Yellow Card app (please see page 2).

Recently there have been reports of an extremely rare condition involving blood clots and unusual bleeding after vaccination with AstraZeneca (AZ). This is being carefully reviewed but the risk factors for this condition are not yet clear. Because of the high risk of complications and death from COVID-19, the MHRA, the World Health Organization and the European Medicines Agency have concluded that the balance is very much in favour of vaccination.

If you experience any of the following from more than 4 days and within 28 days after vaccination you should seek medical advice urgently from your GP or Emergency Department.

- a new, severe headache which is not helped by usual painkillers or is getting worse
- an unusual headache which seems worse when lying down or bending over or may be accompanied by
 - blurred vision, nausea and vomiting
 - difficulty with your speech,
 - weakness, drowsiness or seizures
- new, unexplained pinprick bruising or bleeding
- shortness of breath, chest pain, leg swelling
- persistent abdominal pain

Are the side effects different for each dose?

Not all COVID-19 vaccines are the same – some tend to cause more side effects at the first dose, others cause more side effects at dose two. The very common side effects are the same and should still only last a day or two.

Can I catch COVID-19 from the vaccines?

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.

The most important symptoms of COVID-19 are recent onset of any of the following:

- a new continuous cough
- a high temperature
- a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia).

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.

When can I go back to daily activities?

You should be able to resume activities that are normal for you as long as you feel well. If your arm is particularly sore, you may find heavy lifting difficult. If you feel unwell or very tired you should rest and avoid operating machinery or driving.

What do I do next?

If this is your first dose, you should have a record card with your next appointment in between 3 and 12 weeks time. It is important to have both doses of the same vaccine to give you the best protection.



Keep your card safe.
If this is your first dose,
don't forget to keep
your next appointment.

What should I do if I am not well before my next appointment?

If you are unwell, it is better to wait until you have recovered to have your vaccine. You should not attend a vaccine appointment if you are self-isolating, waiting for a COVID-19 test or within 4 weeks of having a first confirmed positive COVID-19 test result.

Will the vaccine protect me?

The COVID-19 vaccine that you have had has been shown to reduce the chance of you suffering from COVID-19 disease. Each vaccine has been tested in more than 20,000 people and each has also been used in many different countries.

It may take a few weeks for your body to build up some protection from the vaccine. Like all medicines, no vaccine is completely effective, so you should continue to take recommended precautions to avoid infection. Some people may still get COVID-19 despite having a vaccination, but this should be less severe.

What can I do after I have had the vaccine?

The vaccine cannot give you COVID-19 infection, and a full course will reduce your chance of becoming seriously ill. We don't know how much it will reduce the risk of you passing on the virus. So it is important to continue to follow current guidance.

To protect yourself and your family, friends and colleagues you **MUST** still:

- practise social distancing
- wear a face covering
- wash your hands carefully and frequently
- open windows to let in fresh air
- follow the current guidance at www.nidirect.gov.uk/coronavirus

Remember

COVID-19 is spread through droplets breathed out from the nose or mouth, particularly when speaking or coughing. It can also be picked up by touching your eyes, nose and mouth after contact with contaminated objects and surfaces.

Vaccination, helping to protect those most vulnerable.

If you need more information on the COVID-19 vaccination please visit: www.nidirect.gov.uk/covid-vaccine

Information correct at time of publication. For the latest version of this leaflet and alternative formats visit the PHA website www.publichealth.hscni.net

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