



## Your guide to a second dose of COVID-19 vaccine

# Are you 16 or 17?

The health service is now offering 2 doses of COVID-19 vaccine to all young people aged 16 to 17 years to help give them longer lasting protection.

You may have recently had a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. This leaflet contains information that will help you make the decision about the right time for you to get the second dose.

### Young people at greater risk

Those young people who are at greater risk of serious illness if they catch COVID-19 have already been offered 2 doses of vaccine, given 8 weeks apart.

This leaflet is aimed at young people aged 16 or 17 who are not considered at greater risk.

### How good is the protection from the first dose?

Studies suggest that even after 1 dose of vaccine your risk of serious complications from COVID-19 infection are greatly reduced. This protection is expected to last for a few months in young people.

People who have had previous COVID-19 infection who then get 1 dose of vaccine, and those who get infected after the first dose, make a good immune response – at least as good as people who have had 2 doses. This suggests that young people who get both infection and vaccine will have high levels of protection.

### What are the benefits of a second dose?

A second dose helps to improve protection in the longer term. Further studies will help us to know how long protection will last.

### Are there any side effects from the Pfizer vaccine?

#### Common side effects are:

- having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection. This tends to be worse around 1 to 2 days after the vaccination
- feeling tired
- headache
- general aches, or mild flu like symptoms

These side effects only last a few days but are more common after the second dose.

#### Less common side effects

Recently, cases of inflammation of the heart (called myocarditis or pericarditis) have been reported very rarely in the first week after the COVID-19 vaccines.

Most of these cases have been in younger men and are more common after the second vaccination.

The side effects include:

- chest pain
- shortness of breath
- feeling of having a fast beating, fluttering or pounding heart

If you experience any of these, seek medical advice from your GP or Emergency Department.

Most people recovered and felt better following rest and simple treatments. Amongst those who get severe side effects, there may be an even smaller number in whom there are some longer-term effects. Longer term studies are underway.

If you had myocarditis or pericarditis after the first dose, you should seek medical advice before having a second dose of the vaccine.

## When do I need the second dose?

You can have a second dose providing you are 16-17 and have at least a 12 week gap after the first dose or after a confirmed COVID-19 test, whichever is the most recent.

Having a 12 week gap may extend the length of time your protection will last after the second dose. This longer gap may also reduce the likelihood of experiencing some of the more serious but rare side effects, like myocarditis, from the vaccine. This precautionary advice comes from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).

The JCVI also suggests that if you have had COVID-19 infection as well as the first dose of vaccine, you are likely to already have high levels of protection and may therefore choose to wait longer before having the second dose.

If you are still unsure, you can discuss your decision with a doctor or nurse.

## Further information

You should read the product information leaflet for more details on your vaccine, including possible side effects, on the Coronavirus Yellow Card website. 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: [coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/productinformation](https://coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/productinformation)



Further information is available from: [www.nidirect.gov.uk/covid-vaccine](https://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](https://www.publichealth.hscni.net)

© Crown copyright 2021

This information was originally developed by UK Health Security Agency and is used under the Open Government Licence v3.0



**Public Health Agency**  
12-22 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BS.  
Tel: 0300 555 0114 (local rate).  
[www.publichealth.hscni.net](https://www.publichealth.hscni.net)

Find us on:

