



COVID-19 vaccination for adults

A guide to the
programme

This leaflet explains the COVID-19 vaccination programme, who is eligible and who needs to have the vaccine to protect them from Coronavirus.

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



What is COVID-19 or Coronavirus?

COVID-19 is a very infectious respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Many people who are infected may not have any symptoms or only have mild symptoms. These commonly start with cough, fever, headache and loss of taste or smell.

Some people will feel very tired, have aching muscles, diarrhoea and vomiting, fever and confusion. A small number of people then go on to have severe disease which may require hospitalisation or admission to intensive care.

Overall fewer than 1 in 100 people who are infected will die from COVID-19, but in those over 75 years of age this rises to 1 in 10.

There is no cure for COVID-19 although some newly tested treatments do help to reduce the risk of complications.



About the types of vaccine

In Northern Ireland there are several different types of COVID-19 vaccines in use. The vaccines have been approved on the basis of large studies of safety and effectiveness.

More than 45 million people in the UK have been vaccinated against COVID-19 and the vaccine has already prevented more than 20 million infections and more than 60,000 deaths from COVID-19.

Am I at risk from COVID-19 infection?

Coronavirus can affect anyone. The risk is higher in older ages. For example the risk of dying from COVID-19 in someone aged 40 to 49 is 3 times higher than someone in the 30 to 39 year age group and 12 times higher than someone in the 20 to 29 year age group. If you are an adult, you should have already been offered the vaccine. If not, you remain at risk, and you can still get the vaccine from the health service.

Pregnant women should also receive COVID-19 vaccine. Please read the COVID-19 leaflet for childbearing, pregnant or breastfeeding women www.pha.site/COVID19infomaterials.

Who cannot have the vaccine?

A very small number of people who are at risk of COVID-19 cannot have the vaccine – this includes some people who have severe allergies and people with certain very rare blood disorders. Most people can have any of the COVID-19 vaccines, but some are only offered certain vaccines. For example, if you're pregnant or under 40 you'll usually be offered Pfizer BioNTech or Moderna vaccines. Under 18s will only be offered the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine.

Who should delay having the vaccine?

If you are currently unwell, self-isolating, waiting for a COVID-19 test, or have recently had a confirmed positive COVID-19 test, you should delay vaccination until later.



Will the vaccine protect me?

The COVID-19 vaccination will reduce the chance of you suffering from COVID-19 disease. 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 – some people may still get COVID-19 despite having a vaccination, but this should be less severe.

A booster programme is now underway. Please see the booster leaflet for more information: www.pha.site/COVID19infomaterials.

The vaccines do not contain organisms that grow in the body, and so are safe for people with disorders of the immune system. These people may not respond so well to the vaccine.

Will the vaccine have 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 side effects after the first dose, you still need to have the second dose. Two doses gives good protection for a few months.

Very common side effects include:

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

You can rest and take paracetamol (follow the dose advice in

the packaging) to help make you feel better. Although feeling feverish is not uncommon for 2 to 3 days, a high temperature* is unusual and may indicate you have COVID-19 or another infection. Side effects following vaccination normally last less than a week. If your symptoms seem to get worse or if you are concerned, call your GP or out of hours service.

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

A condition involving blood clots and unusual bleeding has been reported extremely rarely after the first dose of AstraZeneca vaccine. Because of the high risk of complications and death from COVID-19, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), the World Health Organization and the European Medicines Agency have concluded that the balance is very much in favour of vaccination. This rare condition is slightly more common in younger individuals, so the JCVI has recommended a preference for an alternative vaccine in some age groups.

If you experience any of the following for more than 4 days and within 28 days (4 weeks) 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



Recently, cases of inflammation of the heart (called myocarditis or pericarditis) have been reported very rarely after COVID-19 vaccines. Most of these cases have been in younger men and usually a few days after vaccination. Most of these people recovered and felt better following rest and simple treatments.

You should seek medical advice urgently if you experience:

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

If you have any of the above symptoms after your first vaccination, you should speak to your doctor or specialist before having the second dose.

If you do seek advice from a doctor or nurse please make sure you tell them about your vaccination (show them the vaccination card if possible) so that they can assess you properly. You can also report suspected side effects to vaccines and medicines through the Yellow Card scheme. See page 8.

Can I catch COVID-19 from the vaccine?

You cannot catch COVID-19 from the vaccine but it is possible to have caught COVID-19 and not 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

If you have the symptoms above, stay at home and arrange to have a test.

What do I do next?

After you have had the first dose you will be invited for your second appointment. Your next appointment should be around 8 to 12 weeks later. The first 2 doses will give you good protection. A booster programme is now underway, please see the booster leaflets here: www.pha.site/COVID19infomaterials.

**Keep your card
safe and make sure
you keep your next
appointment to get
your second dose.**



What should I do if I am not well when my appointment is due?

If you are unwell, it is better to wait until you have recovered to have your vaccine, but you should try to have it as soon as possible.

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 positive COVID-19 test.

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

Remember

COVID-19 is spread through droplets expelled 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.

You **MUST** still continue to follow any national or local restrictions and:

- where advised wear a face mask
- practise social distancing
- wash your hands regularly
- open windows to let in fresh air
- follow the current guidance at www.nidirect.gov.uk/coronavirus

Vaccination, helping to protect the population

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

For the latest version of this leaflet and alternative formats visit the PHA website www.publichealth.hscni.net

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