



COVID-19 vaccine

A guide to the spring booster for those aged 75 years and older residents in care homes



People aged 75 years and older, residents in care homes for older people, and those aged 12 and over with weakened immune systems will be offered a spring booster of coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine.

Who is being offered a spring booster?

COVID-19 is more serious in older people and those with a weakened immune system. Protection from the vaccine may be lower and may decline more quickly in these people. For this reason people aged 75 years and over, those in care homes and those aged 12 years and over with a weakened immune system are being offered the spring booster.

Although vaccines are expected to provide good protection against severe COVID-19 disease, protection against mild infection with the Omicron variant seems to decline quickly, even after the booster dose.

This spring booster is being offered as a precaution to those at extremely high risk, most of whom received their first booster around 6 months ago. If the number of infections increases over the summer, this booster should help to reduce your risk of being admitted to hospital with COVID-19.

Timing of the spring booster

You should have the spring booster around 6 months (and not before 3 months) since your last dose of vaccine.

Which vaccine will you be offered?

You will be given a booster dose of either Pfizer or Moderna vaccine*. Both vaccines boost well and have already been given to millions of people in the UK.

Studies have shown those aged 18 and over who can get the Moderna vaccine only need a half dose to boost the immune system well. This half dose of Moderna is expected to have a low rate of side effects including myocarditis.

You will be offered the right vaccine for you, which may be the same or different from the vaccines that you had before.

* You may be offered the AstraZeneca vaccine if this is what you had for your previous doses and you cannot receive either of the other vaccines.

Who cannot take up the offer of a spring booster

There are very few people who should not have this booster.

If you have had a severe reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine you should discuss this with your doctor.

Side effects

Common side effects

As with your previous dose, the common side effects are the same for all COVID-19 vaccines used in the UK and 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 you feel better.

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 you may need to have a test.

Symptoms following vaccination normally last less than a week. If your symptoms seem to get worse or if you are concerned, you can contact your GP. You can also report suspected side effects of vaccines and medicines through the [Yellow Card scheme](#).

Serious side effects

Worldwide, there have also been very rare cases of inflammation of the heart called myocarditis or pericarditis reported after the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines.

These cases have been seen mostly in younger men and within several days of vaccination. Most of these people recovered and felt better following rest and simple treatments.

You should seek medical advice urgently from your GP or Emergency Department if, after vaccination, you experience:

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

If you had serious side effects after any previous dose you may be advised to avoid or delay further vaccination. You should discuss this with your doctor or specialist.



Can you still catch COVID-19 after having the vaccine?

The COVID-19 vaccination will reduce the chance of you suffering from COVID-19. It may take a few days for your body to build up some protection from the booster.

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.

If you have not had all your vaccinations

If you have not yet had either of your first 2 doses of the vaccine you should have them as soon as possible.

Further information

An information leaflet on what to expect after vaccination is available to download at pha.site/COVID19infomaterials

Read the [product information leaflets for UK recipients of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines](#) for more details on your vaccine, including possible side effects.

You can also report suspected side effects on the [coronavirus Yellow Card](#) website.



<https://coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk>

If you missed your first booster or third dose (for those with weakened immune system), you should have this spring booster as soon as possible.

You may need another booster as well as your usual flu injection in the autumn.

If you have a COVID-19 positive result, when can you have a spring booster?

If you are unwell, wait until you have recovered to have your vaccine. If you have had confirmed COVID-19 you should ideally wait 4 weeks before having your spring booster. You should not attend a vaccine appointment if you are self-isolating or waiting for a COVID-19 test.

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

© Crown copyright 2022

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

Find us on:

