

## A guide to the spring 2026

# COVID-19 vaccination programme

**People aged 75 years and older, residents in care homes for older people, and those aged 6 months and over with a weakened immune system will be offered a dose of coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine this spring.**

### Who is being offered a spring vaccine?

COVID-19 is more serious in older people and in people with certain underlying health conditions. For these reasons, people aged 75 years and over, those in care homes for older people, and those aged 6 months and over with a weakened immune system are being offered a spring dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

### Timing of the spring vaccine

You should be offered an appointment between April and June. You will be invited to have your vaccine around 6 months after your last dose, but you can have it as soon as 3 months.

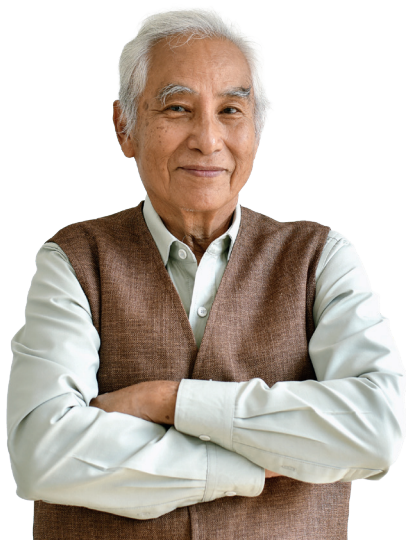
If you are turning 75 years of age between April and June, you do not have to wait until your birthday, you can attend when you are called for vaccination.

## Which vaccine will you be offered?

You will be given a dose of a vaccine made by Pfizer, Moderna or Sanofi and approved in the UK. These vaccines are updated forms of the vaccines used in previous campaigns and produce slightly higher levels of antibody against some strains of Omicron (a variant of COVID-19).

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises on which variants of COVID-19 are likely to be circulating this spring and summer and makes recommendations on which vaccines are suitable and effective.

**Please accept the vaccination that is offered to you as soon as you are able to – you will be offered the right vaccine for you at the right time.**



## Who cannot take up the offer of a spring vaccine

There are very few eligible people who should not have a dose this spring. 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, including the updated vaccines being used this spring 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.

Side effects 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 practice or out of hours service for advice.

You can also report suspected side effects of vaccines and medicines. Please see the contact information for the scheme on the back of this leaflet.

**Serious side effects:** Cases of inflammation of the heart (called myocarditis or pericarditis) have been reported very rarely after the Pfizer, Moderna and Sanofi COVID-19 vaccines. These cases have been seen mostly in younger men and within several days of vaccination. Most of the people affected have felt better and recovered quickly following rest and simple treatments. You should seek medical advice urgently if, after vaccination, you experience:

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

If you had a serious side effect after a previous dose you may be advised to avoid or delay further vaccination. You should discuss this with your doctor or specialist. Please see the back page of the leaflet on how to report side effects.

### **What should you do if you are not well on the day of your appointment?**

If you are unwell, wait until you have recovered to have your vaccine. You should not attend an appointment if you have a fever or think you might be infectious to others.

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

The COVID-19 vaccine will reduce the chance of you becoming severely unwell from COVID-19 this spring and summer. It may take a few days for your body to build up some extra protection from the dose. Like all medicines, no vaccine is completely effective. Some people may still get COVID-19 despite having a vaccination, but any infection should be less severe.

### **If you have not had all your vaccinations**

If you are eligible but have not been vaccinated before or have missed a previous dose, you should still have one dose this spring. Most people do not need extra doses to make up for those they have missed. If you have a severely weakened immune system your doctor may advise an extra dose three months after you have the spring vaccine.

### **Will I have to wait after my vaccine?**

If you have a history of allergies, or if you had a reaction immediately after a previous dose, you may be advised to stay for 15 minutes after the vaccine. Please make sure you tell the vaccinator.



## Further information

You will be invited for your vaccination by your GP. Alternatively, you can attend a local community pharmacy or HSC Trust vaccination clinic for your vaccine.

You can read other previously issued information leaflets, including a guide for people with a weakened immune system, at

**[www.pha.site/covid19infomaterials](http://www.pha.site/covid19infomaterials)**

Information on the vaccines used in Northern Ireland, including ingredients and possible side effects, is available at **[www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-vaccine-safety](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-vaccine-safety)**

More information on COVID-19 can be found at **[www.nidirect.gov.uk/covid-vaccine](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/covid-vaccine)**



You can also report suspected side effects on the Yellow Card website or by calling 0800 731 6789 (9am to 5pm Monday to Friday) or by downloading the Yellow Card app

**[www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard](http://www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard)**

Information correct at time of publication.  
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