



A guide to the COVID-19 autumn vaccination

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine will be offered from October to people aged 75 and over, residents in care homes for older people and anyone aged 6 months and over who is immunosuppressed to protect them ahead of winter.

Who is being offered COVID-19 vaccination?

COVID-19 is more serious in older people and in people who are immunosuppressed. This winter it is expected that many respiratory infections, including COVID-19 and flu may be circulating at high levels – this may put increasing pressure on hospitals and other health care services. For these reasons, people aged 75 years and over, those in older adult care homes, and those aged 6 months and over who are immunosuppressed are being offered a COVID-19 vaccine from October.

The vaccination programme is targeted at those at high risk of the complications of COVID-19 infection, who may have not been vaccinated for a few months. As the number of COVID-19 infections may increase over the winter, this should help to reduce your risk of being admitted to hospital with COVID-19. The vaccine may also provide some protection against mild COVID-19 infection but such protection does not last for long.

Timing of your vaccination

You should be offered an appointment between October and December. You should have your vaccine at least 3 months after your last one.

If you are eligible for a flu vaccine, you may be able to have them at the same time – or you can have them separately.

Which vaccine will you be offered?

You will be given a vaccine made by Pfizer, Moderna or HIPRA depending on your age and medical history.

These vaccines are updated forms of the vaccines used in previous campaigns and produce slightly higher levels of antibody against some strains of Omicron.

As we cannot predict which variants of COVID-19 will be circulating this winter, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) have concluded that these are the best vaccines to offer.

So you will be offered the right vaccine for you at the right time.



Please accept the vaccination that is offered to you as soon as you are able to – it is important to have your vaccine to build up your protection against severe illness before the winter.

Who cannot take up the offer of a COVID-19 vaccine

There are very few people who should not have this vaccine. If you have had a severe reaction to a previous COVID-19 vaccination you should discuss this with your doctor.

Side effects

Common side effects:

The common side effects are the same for all COVID-19 vaccines, including the vaccines being used this autumn, 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 practice or out of hours service for advice. You can also report suspected side effects of vaccines and medicines through the Yellow Card scheme. See back page for details.

Serious side effects:

Cases of inflammation of the heart (called myocarditis or pericarditis) have been reported very rarely after the 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:

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- chest pain
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- shortness of breath
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- feelings of having a fast-beating, fluttering or pounding heart
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If you had serious side effects after any previous COVID-19 vaccination 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 to see how to report side effects.



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 winter. It may take a few days for your body to build up some extra protection from the vaccine. Like all medicines, no vaccine is completely effective – some people may still get COVID-19 illness despite having a vaccination, but any infection should be less severe.

If you have not had all your vaccinations

If you have not been vaccinated before or if you missed a previous offer you should still go ahead – you will not need to have any additional vaccinations

If you have a COVID-19 positive result, when can you have your vaccination?

If you are unwell, wait until you have recovered to have your vaccine. There is no need to wait after having had COVID-19, provided you are well. You should not attend a vaccine appointment if you think you could be infectious to others.

Further information

You will be invited for your vaccination by your GP. Alternatively, you can attend a participating 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**

The product information leaflet for UK recipients of the Pfizer vaccine, including ingredients and possible side effects, is available at **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**



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**

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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