



Public Health  
England

**NHS**

**COVID-19 vaccination**

# A guide for adults

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

Find out more at [nhs/CovidVaccine](https://www.nhs.uk/covidvaccine)



## What is COVID-19 or Coronavirus?

COVID-19 is caused by a new coronavirus, known as SARS-CoV-2. It was first identified in late 2019. It is very infectious and can lead to severe respiratory disease.

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 the UK several different types of COVID-19 vaccines will be used during 2021. The vaccines will only be approved on the basis of large studies of safety and effectiveness.



## Who should have the COVID-19 vaccines?

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), an independent expert group, has recommended that the NHS offers these vaccines first to those at highest risk of catching the infection and of suffering serious complications if they catch the infection.

This includes older adults, frontline health and social care workers, care home residents and staff, and those with certain clinical conditions. When more vaccine becomes available, the vaccines will be offered to other people at risk as soon as possible.

## What can I do after I have had the COVID-19 vaccine?

The vaccine cannot give you COVID-19 infection, and two doses will reduce your chance of becoming seriously ill. We do not yet know how much it will reduce the chance of you catching and passing on the virus. So, it is important to continue to protect those around you.

Remember to protect yourself and your family, friends and colleagues you MUST still follow any national or local restrictions and:

- practise social distancing
- wear a face mask
- wash your hands regularly

## Am I at increased risk from COVID-19 infection?

Coronavirus can affect anyone. If you are an older adult and have a long-term health condition, COVID-19 can be very serious and in some cases fatal.



## You should have the COVID-19 vaccine if you are:

- an adult living or working in a care home for the elderly
- a frontline healthcare worker
- a frontline social care worker
- a carer working in domiciliary care
- the sole or main carer for a highly vulnerable individual
- aged 65 years and over
- younger adults with long-term clinical conditions (see below)

The vaccine will also be offered to adults with conditions such as:

- a blood cancer (such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma)
- diabetes
- dementia
- a heart problem
- a chest complaint or breathing difficulties, including bronchitis, emphysema or severe asthma
- a kidney disease
- a liver disease
- lowered immunity due to treatment for cancer (including chemotherapy and radiotherapy)
- lowered immunity from the treatment of conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, lupus and psoriasis
- disorders of the immune system (including HIV infection)
- having had an organ transplant
- having had a stroke or a transient ischaemic attack (TIA)
- a neurological or muscle wasting condition
- a severe or profound learning disability
- a problem with your spleen, e.g sickle cell disease, or having had your spleen removed
- are seriously overweight (BMI of 40 and above)
- are severely mentally ill

All people who are in the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable group will be eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine. When you are offered the vaccine may depend on the severity of your condition. Your GP can advise on whether you are eligible.



## 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 symptoms after the first dose, you still need to have the second dose. Although you should get good protection from the first dose, having the second dose should give you longer lasting protection against the virus.

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 1-2 days after the vaccine
- feeling tired
- headache
- general aches, or mild flu like symptoms

You can rest and take the normal dose of paracetamol (follow the advice in the packaging) to help you feel better. Although feeling feverish is not uncommon for two to three days, a high temperature is unusual and may indicate you have COVID-19 or another infection.

Symptoms following vaccination normally last less than a week. If your symptoms seem to get worse or if you are concerned, call NHS 111.

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 next page.

**If you are currently in the clinically extremely vulnerable group, please continue to follow the government guidance.**

## 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 realise you 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 need to plan to attend your second appointment. You should have a record card and your next appointment should be between 3 and 12 weeks later. Although the first dose will give you good protection, you need the second dose to get longer lasting protection.

### What should I do if I am not well when it is my next appointment?

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 unsure if you are fit and well.

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



**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](https://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:

- practise social distancing
- wear a face mask
- wash your hands regularly

## Vaccination, helping to protect those most vulnerable.

If you need more information on the COVID-19 vaccination please visit: [nhs.uk/CoronavirusVaccination](https://www.nhs.uk/CoronavirusVaccination)

You can order more of these free leaflets at [www.healthpublications.gov.uk](https://www.healthpublications.gov.uk)

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