

The COVID-19 vaccination: Frequently Asked Questions

Is the vaccine safe?

Yes. The NHS will not offer any Covid-19 vaccinations to the public until independent experts have signed off that it is safe to do so.

The MHRA, the official UK regulator, have said that both of these vaccines have good safety profiles and offer a high level of protection, and we have full confidence in their expert judgement and processes.

As with any medicine, vaccines are highly regulated products.

There are checks at every stage in the development and manufacturing process, and continued monitoring once it has been authorised and is being used in the wider population.

Can I have the vaccine if I'm currently pregnant?

There's no evidence the COVID-19 vaccine is unsafe if you're pregnant. But more evidence is needed before you can routinely be offered it.

The JCVI has updated its advice to recommend you may be able to have the vaccine if you're pregnant and:

- at high risk of getting coronavirus because of where you work
- have a health condition that means you're at high risk of serious complications of coronavirus

Speak to a healthcare professional before you have the vaccination. They will discuss the benefits and risks with you.

Can I have the vaccine if I'm currently breastfeeding?

There are no data on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in breastfeeding or on the breastfed infant. Despite this, COVID-19 vaccines are not thought to be a risk to the breastfeeding infant, and the benefits of breast-feeding are well known. Because of this, the JCVI has recommended that the vaccine can be received whilst breastfeeding. This is in line with recommendations in the USA and from the World Health Organisation.

Can I have the vaccine if I am trying to conceive?

You do not need to avoid pregnancy after vaccination. The vaccine cannot give you or your baby COVID-19.

If you have had the first dose and then become pregnant you should delay the second dose until after the pregnancy is over (unless you are at high risk).

Can I choose which vaccine I have?

No. Any vaccines that the NHS will provide will have been approved because they pass the MHRA's tests on safety and efficacy, so people should be assured that whatever vaccine they get, it is worth their while.

Can I have the vaccine if I have severe allergies?

Tell healthcare staff before you are vaccinated if you've ever had a serious allergic reaction.

You should not have the COVID-19 vaccine if you have ever had a serious allergic reaction (including anaphylaxis) to:

- a previous dose of the same vaccine
- any of the ingredients in the vaccine

Serious allergic reactions are rare. If you do have a reaction to the vaccine, it usually happens in minutes. Staff giving the vaccine are trained to deal with allergic reactions and treat them immediately.

Is the vaccine safe for people with sickle cell?

Yes, the vaccine is safe for people with sickle cell.

Does the vaccine contain any animal products?

No. There is no material of animal origin in either vaccine. All ingredients are published in healthcare information on the MHRA's website.

For the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine information is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-approval-of-pfizer-biontech-vaccine-for-covid-19>

For the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine information is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-approval-of-covid-19-vaccine-astrazeneca>

Why do I have to wait for 12 weeks between my first and second dose?

The [UK Chief Medical Officers have agreed](#) a longer timeframe between first and second doses so that more people can get their first dose quickly, and because the evidence shows that one dose still offers a high level of protection. This decision will allow us to get the maximum benefit for the most people in the shortest possible time and will help save lives.

Getting both doses remains important so we would urge people to return for it at the right time.

Is the vaccine mandatory for health and social care workers?

There are no plans for a COVID-19 vaccine to be compulsory. Just as they do with the winter flu vaccine, local NHS employers will be working hard to ensure 100% of eligible staff are able to get vaccinated, and that any concerns that staff have are answered. We are confident that the vast majority of our staff – as they do every year for the flu vaccine – will choose to protect themselves and their patients by getting the vaccine.

If I get vaccinated, will I still be able to pass the virus to others?

There is a chance you might still get or spread coronavirus even after you have the vaccine.

This means it is important to:

- continue to follow social distancing guidance
- if you can, wear something that covers your nose and mouth in places where it's hard to stay away from other people



Find out more about the Covid-19 Vaccination here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/>