

Covid-19 Vaccine Programme: Addressing YOUR concerns

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Will the vaccine give me Covid-19?

The vaccine cannot give you Covid-19. Having the two doses will reduce your chance of becoming seriously ill in the future.

If I've had Covid-19, do I need to have the vaccine? What if I have or have had 'Long Covid'?

We don't know if having Covid-19 protects you from catching it again so we encourage everyone to get the vaccine when they are invited to do so.

If you have symptoms that could be coronavirus you should get a test and not get your vaccine until your period of self-isolation has ended.

Where people are suffering significant ongoing complications from having had Covid-19, they should discuss whether or not to have a vaccine now with a clinician.

How does the vaccine work, and how long does it work for?

The vaccine works by making a protein from the virus that is important for creating protection.

The protein works in the same way they do for other vaccines by stimulating the immune system to make antibodies and cells to fight the infection.

We expect these vaccines to work for at least a year – if not longer. This will be constantly monitored.

Is the NHS confident the vaccine is 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, has said these vaccines are safe and highly effective.

As with any medicine, vaccines are checked at every stage in the development and manufacturing process, and are monitored once they have been authorised and are being used in the wider population.

Are there any side effects?

Side effects are important details which the MHRA always consider when assessing candidate vaccines for use.

For the Covid-19 vaccines, like lots of others, they have identified that some people might feel slightly unwell, but they report that no significant side effects have been observed in the tens of thousands of people involved in trials.

When you have had the Covid-19 vaccination, you may have some mild side effects. These can include:

- a sore arm where the needle went in
- feeling tired
- a headache
- feeling achy

You can take painkillers, such as paracetamol, if you need to. If your symptoms get worse or you are worried, call 111.

More information on possible side effects:
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/>

What about the allergic reactions that have been reported?

The Covid-19 vaccines are safe and effective for the vast majority of people – they have been tested on tens of thousands of people and assessed by experts.

Any person with a history of immediate anaphylaxis (allergic reaction) to the ingredients contained in the vaccines should not receive them.

A second dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine should not be given to those who have experienced anaphylaxis to the first dose of Pfizer/BioNTech vaccination.

Everybody will be asked questions to see if they may have an allergic reaction before getting vaccinated.

All vaccinators have the training they need to deal with any rare cases of allergic reactions, and all venues will be equipped to care for people who need it – just like with any other vaccine.

Can the vaccine alter your genetic material?

There is no evidence to suggest that having the Covid-19 vaccine will alter the genetic material of the person receiving it.

Does the Covid-19 vaccine affect fertility?

There is no evidence that the Covid-19 vaccine affects fertility.

Can I have the vaccine if I'm pregnant or breastfeeding?

Yes. The MHRA has updated their guidance to say that pregnant women and those who are breastfeeding can have the vaccine but should discuss it with a clinician to ensure that the benefits outweigh any potential risks.

Will the vaccines work with the new strains of coronavirus?

There is no evidence currently that the vaccine will not work against the new strains of Covid-19, so we are continuing to vaccinate people as normal. Scientists are looking in detail at how the virus reacts to the vaccines. Viruses, such as the winter flu virus, often branch into different strains but these small variations rarely stop the vaccines working.

How effective are the vaccines? How long do they take to work?

The MHRA have said these vaccines are highly effective, but to get full protection people need to come back for the second dose – **this is really important.**

To ensure as many people are vaccinated as quickly as possible, the Department for Health and Social Care now advise that the second dose of both the OxfordAstraZeneca and the Pfizer/BioNtech vaccine should be scheduled up to 12 weeks apart.

Full protection kicks in around a week or two after that second dose, which is why it's important that when you do get invited, get yourself booked in as soon as possible. Even those who have received both vaccines still need to follow social distancing and other guidance.

Why do I need both doses of the Covid-19 vaccine?

The Covid-19 vaccine is given as 2 doses, and it is important to have both. Your body builds up better protection to Covid-19 symptoms when the vaccine is given in two, smaller doses, with time in between.

New advice from the UK Chief Medical Officers is that the second dose of the vaccine remains effective when given up to 12 weeks after the first dose, and should be given towards the end of this 12 week period.

This will help ensure that as many people as possible benefit from the first dose of the vaccine as soon as possible. There are no safety concerns where people have already had their second dose earlier than 12 weeks after their first dose.

How were vaccines developed so quickly?

There are lots of rules around how medicines, including vaccines, are created, tested and made available to the public – and that is no different for the approved COVID-19 vaccines.

There a number of reasons why it was possible to develop the Covid-19 vaccines quickly compared to other medicines;

1. Vaccines are developed through testing them over and over in different phases; the testing phases of the Covid-19 vaccines were run at the same time or overlapping, which sped up the process.
2. The data from the tests were made available quickly so experts at the MHRA could review it as the tests were being delivered and ask questions along the way, as opposed to getting all information at the end of a testing period.
3. The clinical trials for the Covid-19 vaccine managed to involve people very quickly as a global effort meant thousands of people were willing to volunteer.

Has the vaccine been tested with people from different ethnic backgrounds, or people from 'high risk' clinical groups?

The Public Assessment Reports contain all the scientific information about the trials and information on trial participants.

For the Pfizer trial, participants included 9.6% black/African, 26.1% Hispanic/Latino and 3.4% Asian. For the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine 10.1% of trial recipients were Black and 3.5% Asian.

There is no evidence either of the vaccines will work differently in different ethnic groups.

For both vaccines, people involved in the trials were from a range of various ages, as well as those with underlying health conditions. Both vaccine trials found that it was effective with people in these groups.

Details of trial participants for both vaccines are published online.

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>

I can't take some medicines because of my beliefs or dietary requirements. What are the ingredients of the vaccine?

The Covid-19 vaccine does not contain any animal products or egg.

All ingredients are published in healthcare information on the MHRA's website at the links above.

I am part of the Muslim community and I am worried about receiving the vaccine – how can I find out more?

The British Islamic Medical Association have issued specific advice urging Muslims observing Ramadan not to delay getting the vaccine, drawing on analysis from Islamic scholars which says that injections for non-nutritional purposes do not invalidate the fast.

Information about the vaccination programme is available on

- the [Muslim Council of Britain website](#), and
- the [British Islamic Medical Association](#).

Will I be given a choice about receiving the vaccine? Can I choose which variant of the vaccine I receive?

You can choose not to have the Covid-19 vaccine; however, the NHS is encouraging everyone who can to have it. The more people who have the vaccine, the harder it will be for the virus to spread. It will not be possible to give a choice between different vaccines as stocks are limited, so it will be necessary to use what is available at the time.

If I've had the Covid-19 vaccine, can I still infect other people?

The Covid-19 vaccine should protect you from becoming sick, but it won't stop you from infecting other people. So, it is **really important** that you continue to remember hands, face, space. Wash your hands, cover your face and keep your distance from people.

Can I get a Vaccine if I don't have an NHS Number?

Yes. People do not require an NHS number or GP registration to receive a vaccination and should never be denied one on this basis. Local leaders have been asked to take action to ensure this is not the case.

If someone does not have an NHS number but is within an eligible group, services have been advised to vaccinate now, record locally via a paper system, and ensure vaccination is formally documented later.

You can find your [NHS number via the NHS website](#). It will ask for your name, date of birth and postcode, and your NHS number will be sent to you by text, email or letter.

Anyone can [register with a GP surgery](#) - you do not need proof of address or immigration status.