

Booster vaccinations FAQs

What is the COVID-19 booster programme?

The COVID-19 booster programme is the rollout of an additional vaccine dose to people who have previously received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine to ensure continued protection for those most at risk from COVID-19.

Why is the COVID-19 booster programme needed?

We want to provide the people that are most likely to become seriously ill from COVID-19 and those who care for them with the best possible protection for this winter. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has reviewed available data and provided advice that COVID-19 boosters are first offered to the most vulnerable in order to provide maximum protection during the Winter months.

The flu vaccination programme is now running which protects people from serious complications from getting flu, so we would also encourage people that are eligible for a COVID-19 booster to also get their flu vaccination. More information on the flu vaccination is at www.nhs.uk/flujab

Who is eligible for the COVID-19 booster vaccine?

Independent experts, the [Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation \(JCVI\)](#), have said that for the 2021 COVID-19 vaccination programme, the people who received vaccination in Phase 1 of the COVID-19 vaccination programme should be offered a third dose COVID-19 booster vaccine in the same order as the first part of the vaccination programme.

These are:

- those living in residential care homes for older adults
- all adults aged 50 years or over
- frontline health and social care workers
- all those aged 16 to 49 years with underlying health conditions that put them at higher risk of severe COVID-19 (as set out in the [green book](#)), and adult carers
- adult household contacts of immunosuppressed individuals

The JCVI advises that the booster vaccine dose should be offered no earlier than six months after completion of the first course of vaccination.

I am severely immunosuppressed. When will I get my booster?

The JCVI has recommended that people who were severely immunosuppressed at the time of their first or second Covid-19 vaccination should be offered a third dose of the vaccine. This is separate to the booster programme and is an extra 'top-up' dose in response to evidence showing that they may not have responded as well to the vaccine as others and will therefore have lower levels of protection against Covid-19. It includes people with leukaemia and advanced HIV and people who have had recent organ transplants.

Consultants have been asked to identify eligible patients and recommend when the best time would be for them to have their third dose. Patients are being contacted either by their consultant or GP to arrange their vaccination, starting from mid-September.

Is there anyone that shouldn't have the booster vaccine?

There are very few people in the eligible groups who should not have a booster. If you have had a severe reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine you should discuss this with your doctor.

If I'm eligible when and where can I get my vaccination?

The NHS will let eligible people know to have their booster vaccine when it is their turn. The JCVI advises that the booster vaccine dose should be offered no earlier than six months after having the second dose of the vaccination. Like your previous doses, the vaccine will be given in your upper arm.

People will be offered the vaccine through a range of services. Primary care teams will vaccinate care home staff and residents. Health and social care staff will be directed to book their appointments through employers and members of the public will be invited to get their booster through a GP-led service and/or be contacted by the NHS to book through the national COVID-19 vaccination booking service to get their vaccination in a designated pharmacy, vaccination centre or GP-led service.

Why aren't most younger people being offered a booster?

As most younger adults will only have received their second COVID-19 vaccine dose in late summer or early autumn, the benefits of booster vaccination in this group will be considered at a later time when more information is available. In general, younger, healthy individuals may be expected to generate stronger vaccine-induced immune responses from primary course vaccination compared to older individuals.

What type of vaccine will the COVID-19 booster be? What if it's different to the one I have had?

After reviewing data on booster responses from different combinations of COVID-19 vaccines, the JCVI has advised that the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is offered as the booster dose, even if you had a different vaccine for your first course. The evidence showed that the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is well tolerated as a booster dose and will provide a strong booster response.

Alternatively, individuals may be offered a half dose of the Moderna vaccine, which should also be well tolerated and provide a strong booster response. A half dose of Moderna vaccine is advised over a full dose due to the levels of short-term side effects seen following boosting with a full dose in clinical trials.

Where mRNA vaccines cannot be offered (for example due to an allergy), vaccination with the AstraZeneca vaccine may be considered for those who received AstraZeneca vaccine in the primary course.

Will there be any side effects from the booster vaccine?

As with your previous dose the common side effects are the same for all COVID-19 vaccines used in the UK, 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 make you feel better. Although feeling feverish is not uncommon for 2 to 3 days, a high temperature is unusual and may indicate you have COVID-19 or another infection.

Although a fever can occur within a day or 2 of vaccination, if you have any other COVID-19 symptoms or your fever lasts longer, stay at home and arrange 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 call NHS 111.

If you had serious side effects after any previous dose you may be advised to avoid or delay further vaccination. You should discuss this with your doctor or specialist.

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

The COVID-19 vaccination will reduce the chance of you suffering from COVID-19 disease. It may take a few days for your body to build up some protection from the booster.

Like all medicines, no vaccine is completely effective – some people may still get COVID-19 despite having a vaccination, but this should be less severe.

Can I have the booster if I haven't completed the first vaccination course?

No, you need to finish the first course of your vaccination.

Can I get the flu and COVID-19 booster vaccine at the same time?

The COVID-19 booster and the flu vaccine can be given on the same day and for people that are eligible for both, there may be opportunities to have both together. We would encourage you to get your vaccinations as soon as possible and get fully protected rather than waiting as it may not always be possible to get them together.

I haven't yet had the COVID-19 vaccination, can I still get my first jabs?

Everyone that is eligible that hasn't already had their first or second COVID-19 vaccination will still be able to get vaccinated, even when the COVID-19 booster programme begins.

Everyone aged 18 and over can book their initial COVID-19 vaccination through the NHS booking service (call 119 free of charge, anytime between 7am and 11pm seven days a week).

Can I get the booster if I am pregnant?

If you are pregnant and in one of the groups that the JCVI has recommended for the boosters, you are eligible to receive a booster, no earlier than six months after completion of the first course of vaccination. The NHS will contact you when it is your turn.