

COVID-19 vaccine - Frequently asked questions

1) How will patients be invited for a vaccination?

The NHS will contact patients directly. Please do not contact the NHS to seek a vaccine. There are various scams circulating which ask for your bank details in order to get vaccinated. The NHS will never ask for your bank details and the vaccine will be free of charge to everyone.

2) Should I still go to my vaccination appointment if I'm in Tier 4 or lockdown?

Leaving the house for medical reasons, including a COVID-19 vaccination appointment, is allowed in all restrictions. When the NHS does contact you, please attend your booked appointments.

3) Is the NHS confident the vaccine is safe?

Yes. The NHS will not offer any COVID-19 vaccinations to the public until experts have signed off that it is safe to do so. The MHRA, the official UK regulator, has said the COVID-19 vaccines are very safe and highly effective. Over 100,000 people worldwide were involved in the clinical trials for the 3 main vaccines (Pfizer/BioNTech, AstraZeneca/Oxford and Moderna) which make them some of the largest clinical trials for any vaccine, ever.

4) How long does the vaccine take to become effective?

The COVID-19 vaccination will reduce the chance of your suffering from COVID-19 disease. All currently approved vaccines (Pfizer/BioNTech, AstraZeneca/Oxford and Moderna) need 2 doses for full effect. It is important you go to both appointments and get both doses of the vaccine when offered to give you longer lasting protection. You may not be protected until at least 14 days after your vaccination so it is important to continue following the key protection guidelines (Hands, Face, Space).

5) Do any of the vaccines contain any animal product?

No, none of the 3 vaccines (Pfizer/BioNTech, AstraZeneca/Oxford and Moderna) contain any animal products or egg.

6) Who cannot have the vaccine?

People who are suffering from a fever-type illness, such as the Flu or Coronavirus, should also postpone having the vaccine until they have recovered.

You should not have the vaccine if you've ever had a serious allergic reaction to: a previous vaccine; a previous dose of the same COVID-19 vaccine or some medicines, household products or cosmetics. The NHS will give you more details when they invite you for your vaccination.

7) How effective is the COVID-19 vaccine?

All currently approved vaccines show high levels of effectiveness. 95% for 2 doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech, 70.4% for 2 doses of the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine and 94% for the Moderna vaccine.

8) If the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is more effective, why don't we just use that one for everyone?

The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine needs to be stored at minus -70C. This makes it more difficult to store and transport around the country. The AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine is easier to store and transport. This means we can get it to more people, sooner.

9) What is the evidence to show the vaccine is safe for BAME communities?

All currently approved vaccines (Pfizer/BioNTech, AstraZeneca/Oxford and Moderna) have been through rigorous clinical trials with various ethnic groups including White, Black or African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian and Native American/Alaskan. The trials show that all 3 vaccines are very safe and very effective for all different ages, genders and ethnicities.

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10) Do people who have already had COVID-19 need to get vaccinated?

Yes. Having had COVID-19 in the past does not guarantee immunity in the future, especially with the new mutated variant that is circulating.

11) Are there any known or anticipated side effects?

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. Most of these are mild and short-term, and not everyone gets them. Very common side effects include:

- having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection
- feeling tired
- headache
- general aches, or mild flu like symptoms.

12) How have the vaccines been created so quickly?

In the event of a public health emergency, vaccine development can be sped up. This has happened with COVID-19 because:

- money has not been a barrier
- there have been much larger clinical trials much sooner with faster participant enrolment
- scientists have used their knowledge of similar illnesses and previous vaccine work (e.g. SARS) to help design the COVID-19 vaccine
- there has been much greater international collaboration
- the pharmaceutical companies know that there is an urgent demand for the vaccine, so they have invested a lot of resources in it straight away and manufactured at their own risk.

13) I'm not vulnerable so why do I need to be vaccinated?

'Herd immunity' is a concept used for vaccination. It means a population can be protected from a certain virus if enough people are vaccinated. If we don't reach that number, the virus will continue to spread and potentially mutate. To end the pandemic and protect those that are most vulnerable or immunosuppressed, and get our daily lives back to normal, we need to vaccinate as many people as possible.

14) Can I get vaccinated if I'm pregnant?

There's no evidence the COVID-19 vaccine is unsafe if you're pregnant. But more evidence is needed before you can be routinely offered the vaccine. Advice has been updated 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. You can have the COVID-19 vaccine if you're breastfeeding. Speak to a healthcare professional before you have the vaccination. They will discuss the benefits and risks of the COVID-19 vaccine with you. You do not need to avoid pregnancy after vaccination. The vaccine cannot give you or your baby COVID-19.

For more the up to date information on coronavirus vaccines please go to www.publichealthslough.co.uk/campaigns/covidvaccine/

Misinformation, myths, and conspiracy theories present a clear and present danger to public health and ending the coronavirus pandemic. Knowing what to share is vital. We have created a useful checklist you can use to decide what to share: www.publichealthslough.co.uk/campaigns/share/
