

The  
**COVID-19**  
vaccine

# Important information

Protect yourself against COVID-19



**Healthcare workers**

**When offered the vaccine, please get it**



## **What is COVID-19?**

COVID-19 is a respiratory infection that was first identified in late 2019. It is highly infectious and spreads through the air when people cough or sneeze, or when they touch surfaces where it has landed then touch their eyes, nose and mouth.

COVID-19 can cause serious illness, hospitalisation and even death.

## **Why it's important to get your COVID-19 vaccine**

Getting your COVID-19 vaccination as soon as you can should protect you, and may help to protect your family and those you care for.

# The vaccine is the best way to protect yourself from COVID-19

## Protect yourself:

- If you're a frontline worker in the NHS, you are more likely to be exposed to COVID-19 at work. Healthcare workers are at a much higher risk of repeated exposure to the infection.
- Catching COVID-19 can be serious and may lead to long-term complications. These are more common in older staff or those with underlying clinical risk factors.
- Being healthy does not reduce your risk of catching COVID-19 and passing it on.

## Protect others:

- You can spread COVID-19 to patients and colleagues, even if you have very mild symptoms or no symptoms at all.
- Reduce your risk of getting COVID-19 and spreading it to others, especially those who are most at risk.
- You could bring the virus home to family or loved ones, even if you do not have obvious symptoms.

## Protect our NHS:

- With high rates of COVID-19, it's more important than ever to stop the spread of COVID-19, to avoid pressure on the NHS and to keep the healthcare workforce healthy.
- The COVID-19 vaccine should help reduce the rates of serious illness and save lives.

## Who will be offered the COVID-19 vaccine first?

The vaccine is now available and we are prioritising the people who are at greater risk. The first people to be offered the free vaccine are:

- residents in a care home for older adults and their carers
- people aged 80 and over
- frontline health and social care workers.

Vaccination for other groups will begin as soon as the supply of vaccine becomes available. The order in which people will be offered the vaccine is based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). For more information and to see the JCVI priority list, visit [nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine](https://nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine)

**NHS Scotland strongly recommends you get the vaccine as soon as it is offered to you.**

## Is the vaccine safe?

NHS Scotland will only use a vaccine if it meets the required standards of safety and effectiveness. All medicines, including vaccines, are tested for safety and effectiveness before they're allowed to be used. The Medicines & Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has to assess all the data and also ensure a vaccine works and that all the necessary trials and checks have been completed.

It will study:

- lab and clinical trial results
- manufacturing and quality controls
- product sampling
- testing of the final product.

This will be done as quickly as possible without cutting corners, because the COVID-19 vaccines are a priority. The MHRA will only approve a vaccine for supply in the UK if the expected standards of safety, quality and efficacy are met.

The MHRA will also seek advice from another independent body, the Commission on Human Medicines. The safety of the vaccines continues to be checked while in use.

## How does the vaccine work?

The COVID-19 vaccine does not cause COVID-19. It helps to build up your immunity to the virus, so your body will fight it off more easily if it affects you. This can reduce your risk of developing COVID-19 or, if you do get COVID-19, it can make the symptoms milder. The vaccine is also suitable for people with disorders of the immune system.

The effectiveness and immune response of the vaccine is being monitored as the vaccine is rolled out.

## How is the vaccine given?

The vaccine will be given as an injection in the upper arm.

The COVID-19 vaccine will be given in two doses. You will be advised when to return for your second dose. The second dose can be given between 3 and 12 weeks after the first dose. COVID-19 vaccination offers good protection within two to three weeks of the first dose. The second dose completes the course and is likely to be important for longer-term protection. It is important to get both doses to protect yourself against COVID-19.

During vaccination, strict infection prevention and control measures will be in place. It will only take a few minutes to get the COVID-19 vaccine.

## How to get the vaccine

Your NHS health board will confirm local arrangements. To find out how to get your vaccine, speak to your line manager.

### **If you are ill on the day**

You should still go for your COVID-19 vaccine if you have a minor illness without a fever. If you feel very unwell, your vaccine may be postponed until you have fully recovered.

If you're feeling unwell with symptoms of COVID-19, do not attend your vaccine appointment. You should self-isolate and book a COVID-19 test. This can be done at **[nhsinform.scot/testing](https://nhsinform.scot/testing)**

### **I've had COVID-19 before, should I still get the vaccine?**

**Yes.** Even if you've already had COVID-19, you could still get it again. The vaccine will reduce your risk of getting COVID-19. If you do get it again, the vaccine can reduce how serious the symptoms will be.

If you have recently tested positive for COVID-19 – even if you have no symptoms – you should wait until four weeks after the date you were tested to get the vaccine.

## **Can the COVID-19 vaccine be given at the same time as other vaccines?**

You should ideally wait seven days between the COVID-19 vaccine and any other vaccination.

## **Are there any reasons you should not get the vaccine?**

There are very few people who cannot get the COVID-19 vaccines.

The vaccine should not be given to:

- people who have had a confirmed anaphylactic reaction to a previous dose of this COVID-19 vaccine
- those who have had a confirmed anaphylactic reaction to any of the ingredients of the vaccine.

People with a history of serious allergic reaction to food, an identified drug or vaccine, or an insect sting can get any COVID-19 vaccine, as long as they are not known to be allergic to any component of the vaccine. It's important that you tell the person giving you your vaccine if you've ever had a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis).

People with bleeding disorders or people taking medication to thin the blood or reduce bleeding should consult their specialist for advice on vaccination.

**For more information on potential side effects and vaccine ingredients, visit [nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine](https://nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine) for links to the patient information leaflets or call 0800 030 8013.**

## Pregnancy and breastfeeding

The COVID-19 vaccines are not routinely recommended for women who are pregnant as they have not been tested on pregnant women.

**For up-to-date advice on COVID-19 vaccines and pregnancy or breastfeeding, visit [nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine](https://nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine)**

Vaccination in pregnancy could be considered where the risk of exposure to COVID-19 is high and cannot be avoided, or where the woman has underlying conditions that place her at very high risk of serious complications of COVID-19. In these circumstances, pregnant women should discuss the risks and benefits of vaccination with their health professional.

If you find out you're pregnant after you've started a course of vaccine, you should wait until you are no longer pregnant before finishing the recommended schedule (unless you are at high risk).

Breastfeeding women or those planning to breastfeed may be offered the COVID-19 vaccine following a discussion with a health professional.



## Common side effects

Some people may experience side effects after the vaccine. It is important to get two doses of the vaccine, even if you have mild side effects after the first dose. These are usually mild and may include:

- tenderness, swelling and/or redness at the injection site
- headache, muscle ache
- feeling tired
- fever (temperature above 37.8°C).

If you feel uncomfortable, take paracetamol. Make sure you take paracetamol as directed on the label or leaflet.

### Fever after the vaccine

It's quite common to develop a fever after a vaccination. This normally happens within 48 hours of the vaccination and usually goes away within 48 hours.

You do not need to self-isolate or book a COVID-19 test unless you have other COVID-19 symptoms or:

- you have been told by NHS Test and Protect or your occupational health team that you are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19
- you live with someone who has recently tested positive for COVID-19
- you live with someone who has symptoms of COVID-19.

If the fever starts more than 48 hours after the vaccination or lasts longer than 48 hours, you should self-isolate and book a COVID-19 test. This can be done at **[nhsinform.scot/testing](https://nhs.uk/inform-scot/testing)**

## Reporting side effects

As with all vaccines, you can report suspected side effects through the Yellow Card Scheme. You can report side effects of the COVID-19 vaccines online at [coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk](https://coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk)

This information is a guide only. Always get medical advice from NHS24 free on 111 if you're worried about your health.

## Reminder of the common symptoms of COVID-19

The most common symptoms are:



new  
continuous  
cough



fever/high  
temperature  
(37.8°C or  
greater)



loss of, or  
change in,  
sense of smell  
or taste

It is also possible to have COVID-19 without showing any symptoms. If you develop symptoms of COVID-19, you should self-isolate and get a test.

For more information about COVID-19, visit [nhsinform.scot/covid19](https://nhsinform.scot/covid19)

## Further information

If you're unsure about anything, or have any questions about the COVID-19 vaccine, visit **[nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine](https://nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine)** or call **0800 030 8013** (available 8am–8pm 7 days a week) to find out more.

## After 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.

It is not known whether having the vaccine stops you spreading the virus to others so it's important that we all continue to follow the latest government advice.



Translations



Easy read



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Audio



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[www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine](http://www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine)



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