UK Health
Security
Agency

NHS

COVID-19 vaccine

Your guide to booster vaccination

People aged 16 years and over, and those aged 12 years and over who are at risk (including health and social care workers) will be offered a booster dose of coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine. You can book online, or call 119 to make an appointment to have your booster.

What is coronavirus or COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a very infectious respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus and is more serious in older people and those with certain health conditions.

Why are you being offered a COVID-19 booster?

Like some other vaccines, levels of protection may begin to wane over time. The booster will help to reduce the risk of you needing admission to hospital due to COVID-19 infection this winter. Protection against severe disease from the first 2 doses seems to decline very slowly. Boosting your immunity should help to extend your protection into next year and may give broader protection against new variants.

When should you have a booster?

The booster is being offered to those most vulnerable first, and will then be rolled down to younger age groups. Your appointment should be at least 3 months from your last dose, but you may be called later based on your age group.

If you are unwell, wait until you have recovered to have your vaccine, but try to have it as soon as possible. You should not attend a vaccine appointment if you are self-isolating or waiting for a COVID-19 test.

Which vaccine will you be offered?

You will be given a booster dose of either Pfizer or Moderna vaccine*. Both vaccines boost well and have already been given to millions of people in the UK.

Studies have shown that you only need a half dose of Moderna to boost the immune system well. This half dose of Moderna is expected to have a low rate of side effects including myocarditis. See page 3 for more information.

You will be offered the right vaccine for you which may be the same or different from the vaccines that you had before.

Common side effects

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

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* AstraZeneca may be an option if you have had this vaccine for one of your previous doses.

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.

You can also report suspected side effects of vaccines and medicines through the Yellow Card scheme. You can do this online by searching Coronavirus Yellow Card or by downloading the Yellow Card app.

Please see the back of the leaflet for more details.

> 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.

Serious side effects

Worldwide, there have also been recent, very rare cases of inflammation of the heart called myocarditis or pericarditis reported after Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines.

These cases have been seen mostly in younger men within several days after vaccination. Most of these people recovered and felt better following rest and simple treatments.

You should seek medical advice urgently if, after vaccination, you experience:

- chest pain
- shortness of breath
- feelings of having a fast-beating, fluttering, or pounding heart

Is there anyone who shouldn't have a booster?

There are very few people 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.

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.

If you have not had the first vaccinations

If you have not yet had either of your first 2 doses of the vaccine you should have them as soon as possible.

Further information

Visit coronavirus vaccination nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination.

An information leaflet on what to expect after vaccination is available to download or order at gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-what-to-expect-after-vaccination.

Please read the product information leaflet for more details on your vaccine, including possible side effects, by searching Coronavirus Yellow Card. You can also report suspected side effects on the same website or by downloading the Yellow Card app.

https://coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk

You can read the Information for UK recipients of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines here: https://coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/productinformation