



Answering your questions about the Covid-19 vaccine

More and more people are joining the millions already vaccinated against Covid-19. Here you will find the answers to the most commonly asked questions.

EVERY VACCINATION
GIVES US

HOPE

How will I know it's my turn to have the Covid-19 vaccine?

All those aged 18 and over can book their vaccination through the NHS booking service. You can also call 119 free of charge, anytime between 7am and 11pm seven days a week or go to a walk-in NHS Covid-19 vaccination site near you.

Is the Covid-19 vaccine safe?

Before any vaccine can be used, it must pass strict quality, safety and effectiveness tests and be granted approval by the independent Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). The Covid-19 vaccine is no different and has been approved by the MHRA.

Are there any side effects from the Covid-19 vaccine?

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. Most of these are mild and short term, lasting no longer than a week, and not everyone gets them. These may include:

- A sore arm where the needle went in
- A headache
- Feeling achy
- Feeling or being sick
- Feeling tired

If required, paracetamol can help relieve some discomfort.

There have been reports of extremely rare cases of blood clots. The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is safe, effective and has already saved thousands of lives. The MHRA, and the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) have both said that the benefits of the vaccine far outweigh the risks for the vast majority of adults.

The JCVI advises as a precaution that it's preferable for people under the age of 40 with no underlying health conditions to be offered an alternative vaccine where possible.

How can people be confident there won't be long-term side effects?

Every single vaccine authorised for use in the UK has been assessed for safety by the MHRA. Millions of people have already received the Covid-19 vaccine. The MHRA operates the Yellow Card scheme on behalf of the Commission on Human Medicines (CHM). The scheme collects and monitors information on suspected safety concerns and relies on voluntary reporting of suspected adverse incidents by healthcare professionals and members of the public (users, patients and healthcare professionals). You can find out more at yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk

Can I choose which Covid-19 vaccine I have?

No. All vaccines that are available will have been approved because they pass the MHRA's tests on safety and efficacy, so people should be assured that whichever vaccine they have, will be highly effective and protect them from coronavirus.

Why do I need a second vaccination?

Vaccines offer important protection to reduce risk, but they don't make you invincible. Protection from any vaccine takes time to build up. In general, the older you are the longer it takes.

The first dose of the vaccine offers good levels of protection, but to get maximum protection everyone must get a second dose, so we are urging all people to come back. Second doses have now been accelerated for all over 18s, by reducing the dosing interval from 12 weeks to 8 weeks. Book, or re-book, an existing appointment to make sure you get your second dose after 8 weeks.

For more information, visit nhs.uk/covidvaccine

Can people with allergies have the Covid-19 vaccine?

You should not have the Covid-19 vaccine if you have ever had a serious allergic reaction (including anaphylaxis) to:

- a previous dose of the same vaccine
- any of the ingredients in the vaccine

Tell healthcare staff before you are vaccinated if you've ever had a serious allergic reaction. Serious allergic reactions are rare. If you do have a reaction to the vaccine, it usually happens in minutes. Staff giving the vaccine are trained to deal with allergic reactions and can treat them immediately.

Can pregnant or breastfeeding women have the Covid-19 vaccine?

All pregnant women over 18 can have the vaccine – you can book yours now.

It's preferable for pregnant women to have the Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna vaccine because they have been more widely used during pregnancy in other countries and have not caused any safety issues.

You can have a Covid-19 vaccine if you are breastfeeding. There is no evidence that the vaccine has any effect on the chances of becoming pregnant and there is no need to avoid pregnancy after being vaccinated.

The vaccine can't give you or your baby Covid-19. Speak to a healthcare professional before you have the vaccine. They will discuss the benefits and risks with you.

Search 'pregnancy and coronavirus' on nhs.uk for more information.

Does the Covid-19 vaccine affect fertility?

There is no evidence that the vaccine affects fertility, or your chances of becoming pregnant. If you are concerned, please search 'A guide to Covid-19 vaccination – All women of childbearing age, those currently pregnant or breastfeeding' on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) for more information.

How do I know the Covid-19 vaccine has been widely tested on people like me?

Each of the vaccines has been tested on tens of thousands of people across the world and over 30 million people have taken the vaccine in the UK. They're tested on both men and women, on people from different ethnic backgrounds, representative of the UK population and of all ages between 18–84.

How effective are the vaccines against the Delta variant?

Analysis by Public Health England (PHE) shows that two doses of the Covid-19 vaccines are highly effective against hospitalisation from the Delta (B.1.61.2) variant.

The analysis suggests:

- The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is 96% effective against hospitalisation after 2 doses.
- The Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine is 92% effective against hospitalisation after 2 doses.

Can I catch coronavirus from the Covid-19 vaccine?

No, you can't. But it's possible to have caught the virus and not realise you have the symptoms until after your vaccination. If you have any of the symptoms of coronavirus, stay at home and arrange to have a test. If you need more information on coronavirus symptoms, check [nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk)

How does the Covid-19 vaccine work?

Like any vaccine, the Covid-19 vaccine works by teaching your immune system how to create antibodies that protect you from disease. It's safer for your immune system to learn this through vaccination than by catching the disease.

Is the Covid-19 vaccine vegetarian?

The Covid-19 vaccines currently approved in the UK do not contain any components of animal origin and so, yes, they are vegetarian.

I'm young & low risk so the Covid-19 vaccine isn't for me

If we've learned anything from this last year, it's that nobody is really safe. Anyone can get Covid-19, including young people, and anyone can spread it. Getting vaccinated is one of the best things you can do to protect yourself and others around you from the virus, vaccines reduce infections, hospitalisations and deaths from Covid-19.

The Covid-19 vaccine contains alcohol & therefore are not permissible

The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine contains a tiny amount of ethanol. Less than what you would find in some of your daily groceries like bread. Faith Leaders and Muslim Scholars have said that the vaccine is not Haram.

How do I know if the Covid-19 vaccine is suitable for people of my faith?

The approved Covid-19 vaccines are suitable for people of all faiths. They don't contain any components of animal origin or foetal cells.

What vaccine should I be offered if I am under 40?

The (JCVI) advises that it's preferable for under-40s with no underlying conditions to be offered an alternative to the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine where available.

Everybody who has already had a first dose of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine should receive a second dose of the same brand, irrespective of age. The exception is a very small number of people who experienced blood clots with low platelet counts from their first vaccination.

If you are unsure, speak to a healthcare professional.