
Covid-19 booster vaccination programme

Why are some people being offered a Covid-19 booster?

Like some other vaccines, levels of protection may begin to wane over time. The Covid-19 booster helps improve the protection you have from your first two doses of the vaccine and gives you longer term protection against getting seriously ill from the virus. The booster dose ensures protection is maintained at a high level throughout the winter months for those who are more vulnerable to severe Covid-19,

Who is eligible for a booster dose?

Booster vaccine doses will be available on the NHS for people most at risk from Covid-19 who have had a second dose of a vaccine at least six months ago.

This includes:

- people aged 50 and over
- people who live and work in care homes
- frontline health and social care workers
- people aged 16 and over with a health condition that puts them at high risk of getting seriously ill from Covid-19
- people aged 16 and over who are a main carer for someone at high risk from Covid-19
- people aged 16 and over who live with someone who is more likely to get infections (such as someone who has HIV, has had a transplant or is having certain treatments for cancer, lupus or rheumatoid arthritis)

I am pregnant, am I eligible for a booster dose?

People who are pregnant and in one of the eligible groups above can also get a booster dose.

When will I be offered a booster dose?

The booster is being offered at least six months after your second dose. If you are eligible, the NHS will contact you when it is your turn to have a booster. You will receive a national letter or your GP may contact you to book an appointment.

Protection against severe disease from the first two doses seems to decline very slowly so don't worry if your booster vaccine is given after six months. The booster dose should help you to maintain a high level of protection into the next year.

How will I hear about my booster vaccination?

When you are eligible for the booster vaccine, the NHS will contact you with information by letter or text.

Will I be contacted by my GP for my booster dose even if I had one or both of my first vaccines at a mass vaccination centre?

Yes

Which vaccine will I be offered?

You will be given a booster dose of an mRNA type vaccine. The mRNA vaccines used are either Pfizer (now called Cormirnaty) or Moderna (now called Spikevax). You may be offered AstraZeneca if you are allergic to mRNA vaccines.

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

Are there any side effects from the booster jab?

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 one to two 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 a fever can occur within a day or two of vaccination, if you have any other Covid-19 symptoms or your fever lasts longer, you should stay at home and arrange to have a PCR 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 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.

I reacted badly to a previous jab, should I expect the same from the booster?

If you had a very severe reaction/serious side effects after any previous dose you may be advised to avoid or delay further vaccination. You should discuss this with your GP or consultant.

Is there anyone who shouldn't have a booster?

Booster vaccine doses will be available on the NHS for people most at risk from Covid-19 who have had a second dose of a vaccine at least six months ago. Most people who are eligible will be able to have a booster.

If you have had a severe reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine you should discuss this with your GP or consultant.

What if I haven't had a first or second dose yet?

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

You are likely to still need the booster but the timing of it will depend on when you had your first two doses.

Is the booster vaccination the same as the third primary dose vaccination?

No. A third primary vaccine dose is for people with a severely weakened immune system and is not the same as a booster dose. The third primary dose is an extra 'top-up' dose for those who may not have generated a full immune response to the first two doses. A third primary dose is offered at least eight weeks after your second dose.

	Booster dose	Third primary dose
Who is eligible	Those who have had 2 doses of vaccine and who are more vulnerable to severe Covid-19 including those over 50, those who are clinically vulnerable and front-line health and care staff	People with a severely weakened immune system who have already had two doses of vaccine
When	From six months after the second dose	From eight weeks after the second dose
Age	16+	12+

Who is eligible to receive a third primary dose vaccination?

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has recommended that a third dose of the vaccine should be offered to people aged 12 years and over who were severely immunosuppressed at the time of their first or second dose, for example because they have leukaemia, advanced HIV or are receiving or have received immunosuppressive therapy for a solid organ transplant in the previous six months. These patients may not mount a full response to vaccination and therefore may be less protected than the wider population.

When should people who are eligible receive their third primary dose?

The decision on the timing of the third primary dose should usually be made by the patient's consultant. As a general guide, the third dose should be at least eight weeks after the second dose but with flexibility to adjust the timing so that, where possible, immunosuppression is at a minimum when the vaccine dose is given.

This will enable a better immune response to be generated. For example, it is preferable to give a vaccine dose before someone undergoes chemotherapy, rather than during their treatment.

How will people hear about a third primary dose vaccination?

If you are eligible for a third primary dose the NHS will contact you. You will be invited by your GP Practice or consultant to attend your third vaccination appointment.

Can you book to have your booster or third primary dose by ringing 119 or via the online booking system?

You can use the online National Booking Service or call 119 to book your booster once you have received a letter from the NHS inviting you to book your appointment. If you try to book before you have received your letter, you will not be able to use the NBS.

Third primary doses are being given at GP-led clinics and cannot be booked using the NBS. If you are eligible, you will be contacted by your GP or consultant with instructions on how to book an appointment.

I think I might be eligible for a booster or a third primary dose but I have not been contacted, what should I do?

Please wait to be contacted by the NHS. If this advice changes, we will let you know. Alternatively, if you are eligible for a booster and it is at least six months since your second dose, you can attend some of the walk-in centres in our area. Please visit www.grabajab.net for details and ensure that the clinic you plan to attend offers boosters.

I have been invited to have a booster but I think I should be having a third primary dose as I am CEV/immunosuppressed, what should I do?

Please check with your consultant or GP.

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

The Covid-19 vaccination will reduce the chance of you suffering from Covid-19. It may take a few days for your body to build up the additional protection provided by the booster.

Like all vaccines, the Covid-19 vaccine does not provide complete protection – some people may still get Covid-19 despite having a vaccination, but this should be less severe.

- *Further information and guidance on the Covid-19 booster vaccine is available [here](#)*
- *More information on the third primary dose of Covid-19 vaccine for people who are immunosuppressed can be found [here](#)*
- *More details on eligibility and how to book vaccination in the Bristol North Somerset and South Gloucestershire area can be found [here](#)*
- *Local information and support is available on our website [here](#)*