



A guide to the COVID-19 autumn programme 2023

A dose of the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine will be offered this autumn to people aged 65 and over, residents and staff in care homes, anyone aged 6 months and over in a clinical risk group (including pregnant women), and health and social care staff.

Who is being offered an autumn vaccination?

COVID-19 is more serious in older people and in people with certain underlying health conditions. This winter it is expected that many respiratory infections, including COVID-19 and flu may be circulating at high levels – this may put increasing pressure on hospitals and other health care services. For these reasons, people aged 65 years and over, residents in care homes, and those aged 6 months and over in clinical risk groups are being offered a dose of COVID-19 vaccine in the autumn programme.

A dose will also be offered to front-line health and social care staff, those who care for vulnerable individuals and family members of individuals with weakened immune systems.

The autumn programme is targeted at those at high risk of the complications of COVID-19 infection, who may not have been vaccinated for a few months. As the number of COVID-19 infections may increase over the winter, a dose of vaccine this autumn should help to reduce your risk of being admitted to hospital with COVID-19. The vaccine may also provide some protection against mild COVID-19 infection but such protection does not last for long.

Timing of the autumn vaccination

You should be offered an appointment between September and December, with those at highest risk being called in first. You should have your vaccine at least three months after your last dose of vaccine.

If you are eligible for a flu vaccine, you may be able to have it at the same time – if not please go ahead anyway, you can catch up with the other vaccine later.

Which vaccine will you be offered?

You will be given a vaccine made by Pfizer (known as Comirnaty), Moderna (known as Spikevax) or Sanofi (known as VidPrevtyn Beta).

Some vaccines are updated forms of the vaccines used in previous campaigns and produce slightly higher levels of antibody against some strains of the Omicron variant.

As it is not possible to predict which variants of COVID-19 will be circulating this winter, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) have advised that any of these updated vaccines can all be used.

So you will be offered the right vaccine for you at the right time.



Please accept the vaccine that is offered to you as soon as you are able to – it is important to have your vaccination to build up your protection against severe illness before the winter.

Who cannot take up the offer of an autumn vaccine?

There are very few people who should not have this vaccine. If you have had a severe reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine you should discuss this with your doctor.

Side effects

Common side effects: As with your previous dose, the common side effects are the same for all COVID-19 vaccines, including the vaccines being used this autumn, 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

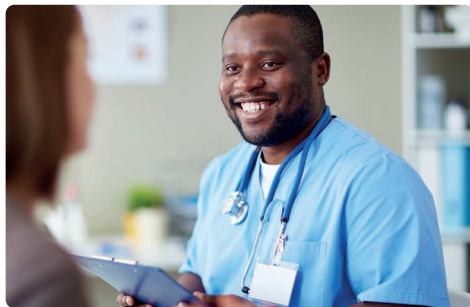
You can rest and take paracetamol (follow the dose advice in the packaging) to help you feel better.

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, stay at home and you may need to contact your GP. Symptoms following vaccination normally last less than a week. If your symptoms seem to get worse or if you are concerned, you can call your GP or Out of Hours service. You can also report suspected side effects of vaccines and medicines through the Yellow Card scheme. See back page for details.

Serious side effects: Cases of inflammation of the heart (called myocarditis or pericarditis) have been reported very rarely after both the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines. These cases have been seen mostly in younger men and within several days of vaccination. Most of the people affected have felt better and recovered quickly following rest and simple treatments. You should seek medical advice urgently from your doctor or Emergency Department if, after vaccination, you experience:

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- chest pain
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- shortness of breath
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- feelings of having a fast-beating, fluttering or pounding heart
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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. Please see back page of the leaflet to see how to report side effects.



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

The COVID-19 vaccine will reduce the chance of you becoming severely unwell from COVID-19 this winter. It may take a few days for your body to build up some extra protection from the vaccine. Like all medicines, no vaccine is completely effective – some people may still get COVID-19 despite having a vaccination, but any infection should be less severe.

If you have not had all your vaccinations

If you have not been vaccinated before or if you missed a previous booster you should still go ahead – you will not need another dose this autumn.

If you have a COVID-19 positive result, when can you have your autumn vaccination?

If you are unwell, wait until you have recovered to have your vaccine. There is no need to wait four weeks after having had COVID-19, provided you are well. You should not attend a vaccine appointment if you think you could be infectious to others.

Further information

You can read the information leaflet for after vaccination and other previously issued information leaflets on the PHA website:

www.pha.site/covid19infomaterials

COVID-19 What to expect after vaccination

A guide on COVID-19 vaccine for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding

COVID-19 vaccinations – a guide for people with a weakened immune system

Read the product information leaflets for UK recipients of the Pfizer, Moderna and Sanofi vaccines, including ingredients and possible side effects.

www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-vaccine-safety

If you need more information on COVID-19 vaccination, please visit:

www.nidirect.gov.uk/covid-vaccine



You can also report suspected side effects on the Yellow Card website or by calling 0800 731 6789 (9am to 5pm Monday to Friday) or by downloading the Yellow Card app

www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard



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