

The  
**COVID-19**  
vaccine

# Important information



Protect yourself against COVID-19



## **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 around you.



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

## Protect yourself:

- Reduce your risk of getting COVID-19. Catching COVID-19 can be serious and may lead to long-term complications. Being healthy does not reduce your risk of catching COVID-19 and passing it on.

## Protect others:

- You can spread COVID-19 to family and those around you, even if you have very mild symptoms or no symptoms at all.

## Protect our NHS:

- With high rates of COVID-19, it's more important than ever to stop the spread of COVID-19. The COVID-19 vaccine should help reduce the rates of serious illness and save lives.

## Who is most at risk from COVID-19?

People aged 50 or over are most at risk, and the risk increases with age. Older adults living in care homes are at greater risk because large groups of vulnerable people are living together. The virus is highly infectious and spreads quickly.

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

## 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 and staff in care homes
- people aged 80 and over (or will be by 31 March, 2021)
- frontline health and social care staff.

Vaccination for other groups will begin as soon as the supply of vaccine becomes available.

**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?

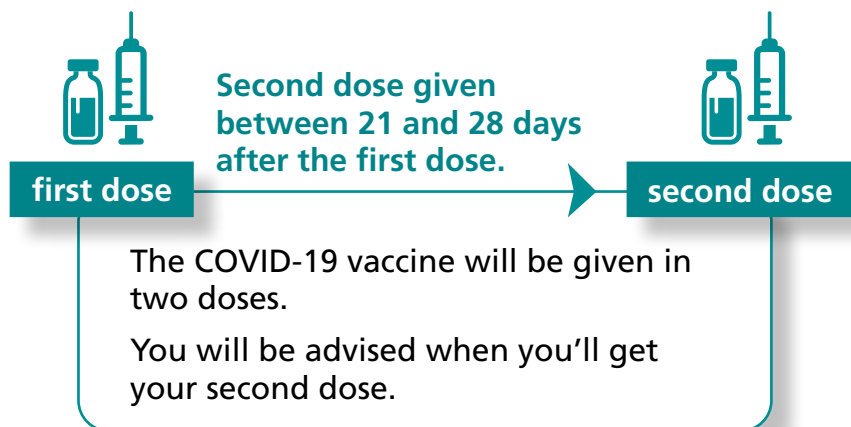
The COVID-19 vaccine does not cause COVID-19. It helps to build up your immunity to the virus, so your body will fight it off more easily if it affects you. This can reduce your risk of developing COVID-19 or, if you do get COVID-19, it can make the symptoms milder. The vaccine is also suitable for people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

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. **It is important to get both doses to protect yourself against COVID-19.**



## How to get the vaccine

Vaccinations are taking place differently across Scotland to reflect the needs of local communities. Your COVID-19 vaccination may not take place at your GP practice. Your NHS health board will confirm local arrangements.

**For more information about the vaccine and its delivery, visit [nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine](https://nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine) or phone 0800 030 8013. It will not be possible to book or change your vaccination appointments via the helpline.**

## **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 vaccination and any other vaccination.

## **How to prepare for the vaccination**

On the day of your vaccine, wear practical clothing so it's easy to access your upper arm.

If you have a fear of needles or feel anxious, try to stay calm and let the person giving you your vaccine know. They will be understanding and can support you.

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

You should not get the COVID-19 vaccine if you have had a severe reaction to any of the ingredients in the vaccine or a previous dose of the vaccine. This will affect very few people but the person giving you your vaccine will be happy to answer any questions you have at your appointment.

**The vaccine is not recommended for women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy as it has not been tested on pregnant women. Pregnancy should also be avoided for at least two months after the second dose of the vaccine.** If you are breastfeeding, you should wait until you have finished breastfeeding to have the vaccine.

All women of childbearing age, those currently pregnant, planning a pregnancy or breastfeeding should read A guide to COVID-19 vaccination. Visit **[nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine](https://nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine)** or call **0800 030 8013** for more information.

**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.**



## 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).

A less common side effect is swelling of the glands. This starts a few days after the vaccine and may last for up to two weeks. This is to be expected and is a sign of the immune system responding to the vaccine.

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 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**

You can also call the Yellow Card hotline on **0800 731 6789** (available Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm).

## 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 on 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. It will not be possible to book or change your vaccination appointments via the helpline.

## After the vaccine

It's 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. After you get the vaccine, it's still important to follow FACTS:



**FACE  
COVERINGS**



**AVOID  
CROWDS**



**CLEAN  
HANDS**



**TWO  
METRES**



**SELF-  
ISOLATE**

**Stopping the spread starts with all of us.**



Translations



Easy read



BSL



Audio



Large print



Braille

For more information, including other formats and translation support:



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



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Information correct at time of publication.  
Please visit [www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine](http://www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine)  
for the most up-to-date information.

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