



Public Health  
England

**NHS**

**CARE**

# COVID-19 vaccination Protection for healthcare workers

All frontline health and social care workers are being offered the COVID-19 vaccine which will help protect you against the COVID-19 disease



COVID-19 immunisation

Protect yourself.

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Getting your COVID-19 vaccination as soon as you can should protect you, and may help to protect your family and those you care for.

The COVID-19 vaccine should help reduce the rates of serious illness and save lives, and will therefore reduce pressure on the NHS and social care services.

## Why it's important to get your COVID-19 vaccination

If you're a frontline healthcare worker in the NHS, you are more likely to be exposed to COVID-19 at work. Healthcare workers and those working in social care (particularly in care homes) are at much higher risk of repeated exposure to the infection.

Catching COVID-19 can be serious and may lead to long term complications. These are more common in older staff or those with underlying clinical risk factors.

You can have COVID-19 without any symptoms and pass it on to family, friends and patients, many of whom may be at increased risk from coronavirus.

Being healthy doesn't reduce your risk of catching COVID-19 or passing it on.

With high rates of COVID-19, it's more important than ever to help stop the spread of coronavirus, to avoid pressure on the NHS and to keep the health and social care workforce healthy.

## Will the vaccine protect me?

The COVID-19 vaccination will reduce the chance of you suffering from COVID-19 disease. Like all medicines, no vaccine is completely effective and it takes a few weeks for your body to build up protection from the vaccine. Some people may still get COVID-19 despite having a vaccination, but this should lessen the severity of any infection.

The vaccine has been shown to be effective and no safety concerns were seen in studies of more than 20,000 people.



## Will the vaccine protect those I care for?

The evidence on whether COVID-19 vaccination reduces the chance of you passing on the virus is less clear. Most vaccines reduce the overall risk of infection, but some vaccinated people may get mild or asymptomatic infection and therefore be able to pass the virus on. It is highly likely that any infection in a vaccinated person will be less severe and that viral shedding will be shortened. We therefore expect that vaccinated health and care staff will be less likely to pass infection to their friends and family and to the vulnerable people that they care for.

## Will the vaccine have side effects?

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. Most of these are mild and short-term, and not everyone gets them. Even if you do have symptoms after the first dose, you still need to have the second dose. Although you may get some protection from the first dose, having the second dose will give you the best protection against the virus.

### Very common side effects include:

- having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection. This tends to be worst around 1-2 days after the vaccine
- feeling tired
- headache
- general aches, or mild flu like symptoms

Although feeling feverish is not uncommon for two to three days, a high temperature is unusual and may indicate you have COVID-19 or another infection (see advice on page 6).

You can take the normal dose of paracetamol (follow the advice in the packaging) and rest to help you feel better. Do not exceed the normal dose.

These symptoms normally last less than a week. If your symptoms seem to get worse or if you are concerned, call NHS 111. If you do seek advice from a doctor or nurse, make sure you tell them about your vaccination (show them the

vaccination card) so that they can assess you properly. You can 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.

## **Who cannot have the vaccine?**

The vaccines do not contain living organism, and so are safe for people with disorders of the immune system. These people may not respond so well to the vaccine. A very small number of people who are at risk of COVID-19 cannot have the vaccine – this includes people who have severe allergies.

## **Pregnant or think you may be?**

Like all new medicines the vaccines have not yet been tested in pregnant women. So, we advise that most low risk women should wait until their pregnancy is completed before they are vaccinated. Please speak to your employer about other ways to reduce your risk of COVID-19.

Most women who catch COVID-19 during pregnancy do not suffer a more serious outcome than non-pregnant women and will go on to deliver a healthy baby. As more safety data on the vaccine becomes available this advice may change. If you are pregnant, but believe you are at high risk, you may wish to discuss having the vaccine now with your doctor or nurse.

If you find out that you are pregnant after you have had the vaccine, don't worry. The vaccines do not contain organisms that multiply in the body, so they cannot cause COVID-19 infection in your unborn baby. As we have done for other vaccines, PHE is establishing a monitoring system to follow up women who are vaccinated in pregnancy. We hope this will provide early reassurance for women as time goes on.

Women of childbearing age, those who are pregnant or breastfeeding, please read the detailed information at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-women-of-childbearing-age-currently-pregnant-planning-a-pregnancy-or-breastfeeding](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-women-of-childbearing-age-currently-pregnant-planning-a-pregnancy-or-breastfeeding).

## Can I go back to work after having my vaccine?

Yes, you should be able to work as long as you feel well. If your arm is particularly sore, you may find heavy lifting difficult. If you feel unwell or very tired you should rest and avoid operating machinery or driving.

## Can I catch COVID-19 from the vaccine?

You cannot catch COVID-19 from the vaccine but it is possible to have caught COVID-19 and not realise you have the symptoms until after your vaccination appointment. Please continue to have the regular screening tests that your employer arranges. If you have any of the symptoms of COVID-19, stay at home and arrange to have a test. If you need more information on symptoms visit [www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-COVID-19/symptoms/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-COVID-19/symptoms/)

## What do I do next?

Plan to attend your second appointment. You should have

Keep your card safe and make sure you keep your next appointment to get your second dose.

Don't forget your  
COVID-19 vaccination

NHS

Make sure you keep this record card in your purse or wallet

For more information on the COVID-19 vaccination or what to do after your vaccination, see [www.nhs.uk/covidvaccine](http://www.nhs.uk/covidvaccine)

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a record card and your next appointment should be between 3 and 12 weeks later. It is important to have both doses of the same vaccine to give you the best protection.

## What should I do if I am not well when it is my next appointment?

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

## After I have had the vaccine will I still need to follow all the infection control advice?

The vaccine cannot give you COVID-19 infection, and two doses will reduce your chance of becoming seriously ill. No vaccine is completely effective and it will take a few weeks for your body to build up protection.

So, you will still need to follow the guidance in your workplace, including wearing the correct personal protection equipment and taking part in any screening programmes.



To continue to protect yourself, your patients, your family, friends and colleagues you should follow the general advice at work, at home and when you are out and about:

- practise social distancing
- wear a face mask
- wash your hands carefully and frequently
- follow the current guidance [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

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.



[coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk](http://coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk)

## Remember

COVID-19 is spread through droplets breathed out from the nose or mouth, particularly when speaking or coughing. It can also be picked up by touching your eyes, nose and mouth after contact with contaminated objects and surfaces.



## I have had my flu vaccine, do I need the COVID-19 vaccine as well?

The flu vaccine does not protect you from COVID-19. As you are eligible for both vaccines you should have them both, but normally separated by at least a week.

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Vaccination, helping to protect those most vulnerable.

If you need more information on the COVID-19 vaccination please visit: [www.nhs.uk/covidvaccination](http://www.nhs.uk/covidvaccination)

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