

September 2022

COVID-19 VACCINE FAQ

Questions & answers to support pharmacists to have conversations with patients about the Covid-19 vaccine.

#GetVaccinated

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Is the Covid-19 vaccination safe?

The Coronavirus (Covid-19) vaccine is safe and effective. Over 12 billion doses have been administered globally up to August 2022.

The vaccines approved for use in the UK have met strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness set out by the independent Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Any Covid-19 vaccine that is approved must go through all the clinical trials and safety checks all other licensed medicines go through. The MHRA follows international standards of safety.

So far, billions of people have been given a Covid-19 vaccine and reports of serious side effects, such as allergic reactions, have been very rare. In the UK over 150 million doses have been administered up to August 2022.

To find out more about the vaccines approved in the UK, see:

- [AstraZeneca](#)
- [Moderna](#)
- [Pfizer](#)
- [Spikevax Bivalent](#)
- [Nuvaxovid](#)
- [Pfizer Bivalent](#)

You can read more from the NHS pages around the side effects and safety information of Covid-19 vaccines [here](#).

How effective is the Covid-19 vaccine?

Chapter 14a of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) Green Book looks at the trial data, efficacy research and the real-world data around effectiveness and the evidence confirms that the vaccines have been effective both for reduction in risk of infection and reduced risk of hospitalisation. There is some variation between the vaccines but overall, any vaccination will reduce the risk of infection and hospitalisation.

While there are ongoing cases of Covid-19 in the UK, there is still a risk you can catch it or pass it on. You could still catch or spread it even if you're fully vaccinated or have had the virus before. You should follow the NHS guidance detailed [here](#).

How is the Covid-19 vaccine given and what is the interval in between doses?

The Covid-19 vaccine is given as an injection into the deltoid muscle in the upper arm.

It's given as 2 initial vaccinations. Details about how to get the first and second dose together with details about the required interval between the first 2 doses is updated by the NHS and can be found [here](#).

Booster vaccinations are offered to different cohorts of people at varying times based on levels of risk. Further information can also be found in Chapter 14a of the Green Book [here](#).

How long does the vaccine protection last, and is there a need for a booster vaccine?

There is currently no long-term information to indicate how long immunity lasts following the vaccination and there is some variation in the immunity against the different variants. In very general terms, it seems that the protection levels drop to a very low level within 6 months of vaccination, hence booster doses being offered to those at most risk. More detailed evidence can be found in Chapter 14a of the Green Book [here](#).

What is the planned UK Covid-19 vaccination programme for Autumn 2022?

The 2022 Autumn booster programme is primarily seeking to augment immunity in those at higher risk from Covid-19 and thus reduce hospitalisations and reduce mortality. The JCVI has released the initial cohorts that are eligible for vaccination. As the programme rolls out and depending on the status of cases of Covid-19 this may adapt and change over the Autumn/Winter period. Further details can be found:

- For England [here](#)
- For Northern Ireland [here](#)
- For Scotland [here](#)
- For Wales [here](#).

Does the Covid-19 vaccination cause allergic reactions?

You will need to tell healthcare staff before you are vaccinated if you've ever had a serious allergic reaction.

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.

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 treat them immediately.

The MHRA collates data about the number of Yellow Card reports for each vaccine. This data is regularly updated and can be found [here](#).

You can report any suspected side effect using the Covid-19 Yellow Card safety scheme [here](#).

Should I have the vaccination if I am pregnant or planning to be pregnant?

Pregnant women are at a higher risk of getting seriously ill from Covid-19 and, in the later stages of pregnancy, the baby can also be at risk. Further NHS information can be found [here](#).

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists regularly updates the evidence and guidance around vaccination during pregnancy and this can be found [here](#).

The guidance on Covid-19 vaccination for pregnant women from the Royal College of Midwives can be found [here](#).

Should I have the vaccination if I am breastfeeding?

You cannot catch Covid-19 from the vaccines and cannot pass it to your baby through your breast milk. Further NHS information can be found [here](#).

Can I have the flu vaccine and Covid-19 vaccine at the same time?

Some people may be eligible for both the flu and the Covid-19 booster vaccines. If you are offered both vaccines, it's safe to have them at the same time. Further details about this can be found [here](#).

Questions around ingredients in the Covid-19 vaccine

The Specialist Pharmacy Service has several links containing information for advising individuals with religious or other dietary practices and beliefs on the suitability of Covid-19 vaccines. Further details can be found [here](#).

Questions around indemnity cover when providing Covid-19 vaccinations

For pharmacists working within general practice details about the extent of cover offered for healthcare activities within general practice for each home nation can be accessed:

- For England [here](#)
- For Scotland [here](#)
- For Wales [here](#)
- In Northern Ireland each Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust arranges its own indemnity for NHS services. The links for each HSC Trust can be found [here](#).

Pharmacists working within community pharmacies as employees or locums may be covered by the indemnity arrangements of the pharmacy owner and their insurance provider.

The PDA offers a Covid-19 vaccination extension (to their existing cover) for all members and more details about this can be found [here](#).

Where can I get more information?

A comprehensive list of NHS documents and information relating to Covid-19 can be found:

- For England [here](#)
- For Northern Ireland [here](#)
- For Scotland [here](#)
- For Wales [here](#).

About the Pharmacists' Defence Association

The Pharmacists' Defence Association (PDA) is a not-for profit defence association and trade union for pharmacists. It is the only organisation that exclusively looks after the interests of employee and locum pharmacists across all sectors of pharmacy, currently with a membership of more than 35,000 across the UK, the PDA is the largest representative membership body for pharmacists in the UK and this membership continues to grow.

Delivering more than 5,000 episodes of support provided to members who have found themselves in a critical incident situation in the last year alone, provides the PDA with a rich vein of up-to-date experiences which have informed policies and future strategy.

This experience has recently been informed by the very considerable number of Covid-19 related issues being faced by members. The practical experience gained in supporting member issues from the coal face is further enhanced by regular member surveys and focus group interactions. The information in this document is largely built upon the experience of our many members.

The primary aims of the PDA are to:

- Support pharmacists in their legal, practise and employment needs
- Represent the individual or collective concerns of pharmacists in the most appropriate manner
- Proactively seek to influence the professional, practise and employment agenda to support members
- Lead and support initiatives designed to improve the knowledge and skills of pharmacists in managing risk and safe practises, so improving patient care
- Work with like-minded organisations to further improve the membership benefits to individual pharmacists
- Arrange insurance cover for individual pharmacists to safeguard and defend their reputation.

Find out more about our campaign
www.the-pda.org/getvaccinated

You can watch our #getvaccinated video
on our YouTube channel using the QR Code



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