

Primary course

The **primary** course describes the vaccines given to individuals who have never received the vaccine before. The purpose of the primary course is to provide **new** protection (immunity) for the individual. For the COVID-19 vaccine:

- a complete primary course is two primary doses either 8 or 12 weeks apart – this interval between doses depends on age and whether someone is immunosuppressed ie has a weakened immune system;
- a small number of people with certain medical conditions also require a third primary dose to complete the 'primary course'. People who fall into this category will be notified of this by their hospital clinician or GP.

Booster dose

For some vaccines, protection (immunity) declines over time. A **booster dose** is the name for vaccines given to individuals who have completed the primary course and need to have their existing protection (immunity) increased or 'boosted'.

The number and frequency of booster doses an individual requires depends on their age and underlying health.

Vaccine doses have been named and summarised below to help improve understanding of the different doses:

Vaccine dose	Description
1st primary dose	2 dose primary course.
2nd primary dose	
3rd primary dose	People with certain medical conditions will not respond as well to 1st and 2nd primary doses, and they should have a 3rd primary dose to complete the 'primary course' of vaccination.
Booster dose	Individuals aged 16 years and over who completed their primary course (whether a 2 dose or 3 dose course) should have a booster dose at least 3 months after their last dose.
Spring 2022 booster programme	This booster dose was only for specific high risk groups; those aged 75 years and over, care home residents and immunosuppressed people aged 12 years and over.
Autumn 2022 booster programme	This booster dose is being offered to people aged 50 and over, those in care homes, and those aged 5 years and over in clinical risk groups. A booster is also being offered to frontline Health and Social Care staff, those who care for vulnerable individuals and families of individuals with weakened immune systems. This dose should be given at least 3 months after a primary dose or the most recent booster dose.