

COVID-19



vaccine

A guide to the spring 2023 COVID-19 booster

People aged 75 years and older, residents in care homes for older people, and those aged 5 years and over with a weakened immune system will be offered a booster of COVID-19 (coronavirus) vaccine this spring.

Who is being offered a spring booster?

COVID-19 is more serious in older people and in people with certain underlying health conditions. For these reasons, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advise that people aged 75 years and over, those in care homes for older adults, and those aged 5 years and over with a weakened immune system are offered a booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine during the spring of 2023.

Timing of the spring booster

You should be offered an appointment between April and June, with those at highest risk being vaccinated first. You should receive your booster around 6 months from your last dose but you can have it from 3 months.

If you are turning 75 years of age between April and June 2023, you do not have to wait until your birthday to be eligible.

Which vaccine will you be offered?

You will be given a booster dose of a vaccine made by Pfizer, Moderna or Sanofi, which have been approved in the UK. These vaccines have been updated since the original vaccines and target different COVID-19 variants. For a very small number of people, another vaccine product may be advised by your doctor.

These updated vaccines boost protection well and give slightly higher levels of antibody against the more recent strains of COVID-19 (Omicron) than the vaccines you would have received previously.

As we cannot predict which variants of COVID-19 will be circulating this spring and summer, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) have concluded that all of these vaccines can be used and that no one should delay vaccination to receive a different vaccine.

The Sanofi vaccine contains an adjuvant (a chemical used to improve the immune response to the virus). This vaccine will only be offered to older people, who may respond less well to vaccines. The adjuvant in the COVID-19 vaccine is similar to the one used in the flu vaccine that is routinely given to over 65 year olds. You can read about vaccine ingredients at www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/why-vaccination-is-safe-and-important/

Please accept the vaccination that is offered to you as soon as you are able to – you will be offered the right vaccine for you at the right time.

Who cannot take up the offer of a spring booster

There are very few people who should not have this booster. 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 updated vaccines being used this spring, 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.

Side effects 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. Please see the back page of the leaflet on how to report side effects.

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 a serious side effect after a previous dose you may be advised to avoid or delay further vaccination. You should discuss this with your doctor or specialist.

What should you do if you are not well on the day of your appointment?

If you are unwell, wait until you have recovered to have your vaccine. You should not attend an appointment if you have a fever or think you might be infectious to others.

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

The COVID-19 booster will reduce the chance of you becoming severely unwell from COVID-19 this spring and summer. It may take a few days for your body to build up some extra protection from the booster. 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 yet had either of your first two doses of the vaccine (or a third dose for those with a severely weakened immune system), you should have them as soon as possible. If you are eligible and you have missed an earlier booster, you should have a dose this spring to catch up. You will not need another dose during the summer.

Will I have to wait for 15 minutes after my vaccination?

If you have a history of allergies, or if you had a reaction immediately after a previous dose, you may be advised to stay for 15 minutes after vaccination. Please make sure you tell the vaccinator.



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 possible side effects.

www.coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/productinformation

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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