

COVID-19 vaccine

The COVID-19 vaccine helps protect against COVID-19, which can be a serious or life-threatening illness for some people. It's usually offered on the NHS in spring and early winter to people who need extra protection from COVID-19.

COVID-19 vaccinations are currently not available.

Winter COVID-19 vaccinations have ended.

The NHS will contact you in spring 2026 if you're eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine.

What the COVID-19 vaccine is for

COVID-19 vaccination is an important part of protecting yourself if you're at increased risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19.

The COVID-19 vaccines are offered because viruses change and protection fades over time. It's important to top up your protection if you're eligible.

Getting the COVID-19 vaccine can:

- help reduce your risk of getting severe symptoms
- help you recover more quickly if you catch COVID-19
- help reduce your risk of having to go to hospital or dying from COVID-19
- protect against different types of COVID-19 virus

You may still get or spread COVID-19 even if you have a vaccine, so it's important to follow advice about how to avoid catching and spreading COVID-19.

Who should have the COVID-19 vaccine

You may be offered a COVID-19 vaccine in spring if you:

- are aged 75 or over
- are aged 6 months to 74 years and have a weakened immune system because of a health condition or treatment
- live in a care home for older adults

[Health conditions and treatments that mean you're eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine](#)

You may be eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine if you have a weakened immune system because of a health condition or treatment.

This can include if you:

- have or had blood cancer, such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma
- have had an organ transplant, bone marrow transplant or stem cell transplant

- have HIV
- have a genetic disorder that affects your immune system, such as severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID)
- are having or recently had chemotherapy, biological therapy or radiotherapy
- are taking steroid medicine (depending on the dose)
- are having long-term immunosuppressive treatment for a condition such as lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), scleroderma or psoriasis

This list is a summary and does not include everything. Speak to your local pharmacy, GP surgery or specialist if you're not sure if you're eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine.

How to get the COVID-19 vaccine

The NHS will contact you if you're eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine.

It's usually offered on the NHS in spring and early winter.

When the COVID-19 vaccine is available, there will be different ways to get the vaccine. You may be able to:

- book online
- go to a walk-in COVID-19 vaccination site
- get vaccinated at a local service, such as a community pharmacy or your GP surgery
- get vaccinated at your care home (if you live in a care home)

How the COVID-19 vaccine is given

The COVID-19 vaccine is given as an injection.

Most people only need 1 dose of the COVID-19 vaccine when it's available.

Extra doses of the COVID-19 vaccine

Some people need an extra dose of the COVID-19 vaccine if they have a health condition or treatment that severely weakens their immune system. For example, if they have had a stem cell transplant or CAR-T therapy.

Your GP or specialist will assess your risk and tell you if you need an extra dose of the vaccine.

They will advise you on when to get vaccinated based on your treatment plan, and help you find a local appointment.

Speak to your GP or specialist for more information.

If your GP or specialist cannot arrange an appointment for you, you can contact your local NHS COVID-19 vaccination service.

Find local COVID-19 vaccination contacts on the NHS England website

Having the COVID-19 vaccine at the same time as other vaccines

In winter, you can have the COVID-19 vaccine at the same time as the flu vaccine or RSV vaccine.

Who cannot have the COVID-19 vaccine

Most people who are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine can have it, including if you're pregnant or breastfeeding.

Some people are only offered certain vaccines – for example, if you're under 18 years old.

Children under 12 years old will be given smaller doses than older children and adults.

Most people with allergies can have the COVID-19 vaccine, including if you've had a mild allergic reaction to a previous dose, such as a rash, swelling, wheezing or hives.

If you've ever had an allergic reaction, tell the healthcare staff at your appointment before you're vaccinated.

If you're at risk of a severe allergic reaction, vaccination staff or your GP may refer you to an expert allergist or specialist to assess your risk.

They may advise you to have the COVID-19 vaccine at a specialist clinic or hospital where you can be monitored. This will only happen in rare cases – for example, if you have a history of anaphylaxis.

Getting vaccinated if you're unwell

If you have, or think you have, COVID-19, wait until you're feeling better before having the vaccine.

You should also wait if you have a high temperature or feel very unwell with any illness.

If you've recently recovered from COVID-19, there is no need to wait to get the vaccine.

COVID-19 vaccine ingredients

The COVID-19 vaccines given in the UK are made by Pfizer.

You can check the ingredients in the patient leaflets:

- Pfizer/BioNTech (Comirnaty) COVID-19 vaccine for people aged 12 and over (Electronic Medicines Compendium website; PDF only, 207KB)
- Pfizer/BioNTech (Comirnaty) COVID-19 vaccine for children aged 5 to 11 years (Electronic Medicines Compendium website; PDF only, 199KB)
- Pfizer/BioNTech (Comirnaty) COVID-19 vaccine for children aged 6 months to 4 years (Electronic Medicines Compendium website; PDF only, 187KB)

Side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine

The most common side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine are mild and get better within a week.

They can include:

- a sore arm from the injection
- feeling tired
- a headache
- feeling achy
- mild flu-like symptoms

If you or your child get side effects, rest and take paracetamol or paracetamol for children to help you feel better.

More serious side effects, such as a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis), are very rare. The person who vaccinates you will be trained to deal with allergic reactions and treat them immediately.

There have been rare cases of inflammation of the heart (myocarditis) reported after COVID-19 vaccination. Most people who had this recovered following rest and simple treatments.

The vaccine cannot give you a COVID-19 infection.

Contact NHS 111 if:

You or your child have had a COVID-19 vaccine and:

- have symptoms that are getting worse
- you're worried about your or your child's symptoms

You can call 111 or get help from 111 online.

Call 999 or go to A&E if:

You or your child have any of these symptoms within a few days of being vaccinated:

- chest pain or a feeling of tightness in the chest
- severe difficulty breathing – you're gasping, choking or not able to get words out
- a fast-beating, fluttering or pounding heart (palpitations)

Do not drive to A&E. Ask someone to drive you or call 999 and ask for an ambulance.

Bring any medicines you take with you.

More information about vaccine side effects

- What to expect after your COVID-19 vaccination on GOV.UK
- Myocarditis and COVID-19 vaccines on the British Heart Foundation website
- Report a vaccine side effect on the COVID-19 Yellow Card website

COVID-19 vaccine safety

COVID-19 vaccines in use in the UK have all met strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness.

The safety of the vaccines has been extensively reviewed in both adults and children by the independent Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

The MHRA are continuously monitoring the safety of the COVID-19 vaccines and reports of serious side effects are very rare.