



FAQs about the vaccine

Is the NHS confident that the vaccines are safe?

- Yes. Covid-19 vaccines have to go through several stages of clinical trials before they can be approved for use.
- This is where a vaccine or medicine is tested on volunteers to make sure it works and is safe.
- The approved COVID-19 vaccines have been tested on thousands of people in the UK and around the world, including:
 - people from different ethnic backgrounds
 - people aged between 18 and 84
 - people with different health conditions
- All vaccines used in the UK must be approved by the independent Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).
- The MHRA makes sure the vaccines meet strict international standards for safety, quality and effectiveness. Once a vaccine is approved, it's closely monitored to continue to make sure it is safe and effective.

Is the vaccine safe for children and young people, those aged 16-17?

Any Covid-19 vaccine that is approved for use in the UK, must meet strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) have advised that all 16 and 17 year olds should receive their first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

The vaccination can cause some side effects, but not everyone gets them. Typically side effects for individuals aged 12 to 17 years are injection site pain, fever and headache. These reactions are generally mild and short-lived, typically lasting 1-2 days.

Extremely rare side effects, which usually occur within a few days of the second dose include; myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) and pericarditis (inflammation of the membrane around the heart).

Can 16-17 year olds consent without their parents/carers?

16 and 17-year-olds who are considering taking the COVID -19 vaccine will not need the consent of a parent/carer to do so. Current UK guidance states that at 16 years of age a young person is presumed in law to have the capacity to consent, so young people aged 16 or 17 years should consent to their own medical treatment.

Who cannot have the vaccines?

- It is very rare for anyone to have a serious reaction to the vaccine (anaphylaxis). If this does happen, it usually happens within minutes of receiving the vaccine where trained clinical professionals are on hand to attend to you immediately.
- If you have a history of anaphylaxis reactions please discuss this with your GP

What if I am not registered with a GP (or I don't have papers to stay in the UK?) can I still have the vaccine?

- Yes. Our pop-up and walk in vaccination clinics can give you the vaccine. You do not need to be registered with a GP or have to provide papers about your legal status.

Do we need proof of ID/age to receive a vaccination? What can we use as proof of ID?

At some vaccination clinics you might be asked to provide proof of age, particularly if a vaccination clinic is only vaccinating a specific age group.

Please take along a record of your NHS number. Staff at the vaccination clinic will use this to pull up your record and confirm your age.

If you don't have your NHS number to hand, you can bring along a proof of identification. For example:

- Passport
- Driving license/Provisional license
- PASS card from the national Proof of Age Standards Scheme

How much personal information do I need to give at the vaccination clinic?

- The only information they will need is a name, date of birth and mobile or contact number
- When you go along to our walk-in or pop-up clinic, you can also just explain that you would prefer not give them any personal identifiable information.

How can the vaccine be safe it was developed so quickly?

- The NHS do not offer any COVID-19 vaccinations to the public until independent experts have signed off that it is safe to do so.
- As with any medicine, vaccines are highly regulated products
- There are checks at every stage in the development and manufacturing process and monitoring continues once it has been authorised and is being used in the wider population.
- The COVID-19 pandemic is the most significant worldwide health crisis in over 100 years. An unprecedented amount of investment, research and development went into rapidly creating safe and effective vaccines.
- COVID-19 is not the first coronavirus and over the past few years scientists have been developing potential vaccines against other coronavirus strains (for instance, SARS). When the pandemic began in 2020, the largest investment ever seen was dedicated to producing a vaccine, due to the social and economic impact of COVID-19

What proof do you have that the vaccines are effective?

- Public Health England (PHE) [analysis](#) shows that people who receive a single dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine have approximately **80% lower risk of dying** with COVID-19 compared with unvaccinated individuals. The report also shows protection against death from the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine rises from approximately 80% after one dose to 97% after two doses.
- PHE analysis indicates that the Covid-19 vaccination programme prevented 10,400 deaths in those aged 60 and older in England up to the end of March 2021
- A new study by PHE has also shown that **one dose of the Covid-19 vaccine halves the risk of passing the virus** on to unvaccinated members of the same household

Should I get vaccinated if I have already had COVID, have antibodies from previous infection or I am suffering from 'Long COVID'?

- Yes. The Medicines & Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) have looked at all the evidence collected on this and concluded that getting vaccinated is just as important for you, even if you have already had COVID-19 .

Will the vaccines affect my fertility?

- There is no evidence that the vaccine affects fertility in either men or women and there is no need to avoid getting pregnant after vaccination.

I'm pregnant and worried about getting the vaccine – is the risk of getting COVID-19 during pregnancy higher than the risk of having a serious side effect from the vaccine?

- If you're pregnant, or think you might be, you can have the Covid-19 vaccine
- When you become eligible, you will be offered the Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna vaccine, as they have been used widely in other countries to protect pregnant women and safety issues have not been seen.
- There is no reason to think that the vaccine will have worse side-effects if you are pregnant. More than half of women who test positive for COVID-19 in pregnancy have no symptoms at all, but some pregnant women can get life-threatening complications from COVID-19, particularly if you have underlying health conditions.

Should I have the vaccine when breastfeeding?

You can have the Covid-19 vaccines if you're breastfeeding – you cannot catch Covid-19 from the vaccine and cannot pass it to your baby through your breast milk

Will the vaccines work with the new strains?

- There is currently no evidence that the new strains will be resistant to the vaccines we have – flu and other viruses often branch into different strains but these small variations very rarely make the vaccines ineffective. Scientists continue to study the new strains as they appear

Can I have a different vaccine for my second dose to my first does?

- Currently we recommend that you have the same vaccine as you had for your first dose.

Astra Zeneca

What is the concern around the Astra Zeneca vaccine, and how does it affect me?

- There have been reports of an extremely rare but serious condition involving blood clots and unusual bleeding after AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccination.
- Although this condition remains extremely rare there is a higher risk in people after the first dose of the AZ vaccine.
- To date and overall, just over 10 people develop this condition for every million doses of AZ vaccine given. This is seen more often in younger people and tends to occur between 4 days and 4 weeks following vaccination
- Similar conditions can also occur naturally, and clotting problems are a common complication of coronavirus (Covid-19) infection.
- An increased risk has not yet been seen after other Covid-19 vaccines in the UK.
- Find out more about Covid-19 vaccination and blood clotting on GOV.UK

If you are a healthy person aged 30 to 39 years of age

- In the current situation the JCVI has advised that it is preferable for people in this age group to have a vaccine other than AZ.

- You are more at risk of the serious consequences of Covid-19 and will have the most benefit from being vaccinated if you are older, male, from certain minority ethnic backgrounds, in some occupations, or are obese.
- It is important that you have the vaccination as soon as possible to protect you and to reduce the chance of passing on the virus.
- If the situation changes and you are offered the AZ vaccination you may go ahead after you have considered all the risks and benefits.
- Please carefully consider the risk to both you and your family and friends of Covid-19 before making your decision

If you are a healthy younger person aged 18 to 29

- Currently JCVI has advised that it is preferable for people under 30 to have a vaccine other than AZ because the risk from Covid-19 infection is so low.
- If you are offered the AZ vaccination you may wish to go ahead after you have considered all the risks and benefits for you.

I'm under 40 and have had the AZ jab, what about the second dose?

- If you have already had a first dose of AZ vaccine without suffering this rare side effect you should complete the course.
- This includes people aged 18 to 39 years who are health and social care workers, unpaid carers and family members of those who are immunosuppressed.
- It is expected that the first dose of the vaccine will have given you some protection, particularly against severe disease.
- Having the second dose will give you higher and longer lasting protection and tends to cause less of the common side effects (including short lived headache).

More detailed information from the NHS and FAQs can be found here:
<https://swlondonccg.nhs.uk/covid/your-questions/>