

Young COVID patients share stories to urge others to get jabbed

- Government target hit as more than 1 million letters and texts have been sent inviting all 16 to 17-year-olds in England to get their jabs
- Latest figures show people aged 18 to 34 now make up more than 1 in 5 of those admitted to hospital with the virus
- Watch the [video](#)

Young coronavirus (COVID-19) patients have told their stories of battling the virus and suffering long-term debilitating effects as part of a new film encouraging people to get their vaccines.

The video features several patients who experienced serious symptoms of COVID-19 or developed long COVID, as well as the doctors and frontline staff who treated them, to warn of the dangers of the virus for those who are not vaccinated. It is narrated by A&E doctor, Dr Emeka Okorochoa.

It comes as people aged 16 to 17 in England are offered a COVID-19 vaccine by today (Monday 23 August), meeting the government's target. More than 360,000 have already been vaccinated and letters and texts were sent last week to the remaining people inviting them to book an appointment with their GP or visit their nearest walk-in centre.

All at-risk people aged 12 to 15 in England have also been invited for a vaccination and young people are encouraged to take up the offer as soon as possible to build vital protection before returning to school in September.

The latest figures show that hospitals are seeing a rise in unvaccinated young adults admitted with COVID-19. A fifth of COVID-19 hospital admissions in England are aged 18 to 34 – 4 times higher than the peak in the winter of 2020.

The patients who feature in the new short film have issued a rallying call: young people should take up the vaccine to avoid suffering a similar fate.

Quincy Dwamena, a 31-year-old videographer and support worker from East London, who spent 2 weeks in hospital with COVID-19 after putting off the vaccine, said:

I'm a healthy, young guy. I went to the gym often and have no underlying health concerns. I put off getting the vaccine because I thought the way I was living my life would mean there would be little to no chance of me catching the virus, or it would have

little effect.

But I ended up being hospitalised and thought I was going to die. My advice is to get the vaccine: don't put yourself and others at risk, I wish I'd got mine as soon as it was offered.

Megan Higgins, a 25-year-old special needs tutor from London who is suffering from long COVID, pleaded with others to get vaccinated. She said:

I was always careful about catching COVID-19, but I'm healthy and active so thought if I catch it, I'd probably brush it off. It's now been 8 months since I tested positive, and I can't even walk around the shops without getting exhausted. Long COVID is debilitating so please, get vaccinated. I wouldn't want anyone else to go through what I have.

Ella Harwood, a 23-year-old illustrator from London, said:

I'm young and fit but I was bed-bound for 7 months with COVID-19. Before I caught the virus, I was super active and had no health concerns, but I now suffer with asthma which I didn't have before and a number of allergies.

I fear I'll never be the same again but I'm making progress and I'm very grateful that I'm still alive. Please get vaccinated if you haven't already.

People aged 16 and 17 are able to get vaccinated at one of more than 800 GP-led local vaccination sites and NHS England has launched an online walk-in site finder to help this age group locate the nearest available centre. Further sites will come online over the coming days and weeks.

A total of 89,070,370 people have been vaccinated in the UK, including 47,573,794 people with a first dose (87.5%) and 41,496,576 people with a second dose (76.3%).

Uptake among under 30s is lowest in London where the interviews were filmed.

According to data from Public Health England, the highest COVID-19 case rates are among 20 to 29-year-olds with a case rate of 670.7 cases per 100,000 people in the 7 days to August 8, up week-on-week from 628.6.

More than 1 in 20 people aged 16 to 29 (6.3%) have had long COVID, which is higher than the national average. Many of these have said long COVID has had a major impact on their lives, especially the ability to exercise, work, and maintain relationships.

TV doctor and emergency medicine physician, Dr Emeka Okorochoa said:

As an A&E doctor, I've seen a lot during the pandemic. But nothing has shaken me like the sight of young, otherwise healthy adults, being rushed into our hospitals with COVID-19.

As well as their age, many of them have 1 other thing in common, they are unvaccinated. Vaccines truly are the way out of this pandemic and are the best way to protect everyone from the virus, so please get your vaccine.

Data from Public Health England (PHE) shows COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective against hospitalisation from the Delta (B.1.617.2) variant, the dominant strain in the UK. The analysis shows the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is 96% effective and the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine is 92% effective against hospitalisation after 2 doses.

In all age groups the odds of experiencing symptoms for more than 28 days after post-vaccination infection was approximately halved by 2 vaccinations.

COVID-19 vaccines have saved around 95,200 lives and prevented 82,100 hospitalisations and 23.9 million infections in England alone, the latest data from Public Health England and Cambridge University shows.

Alongside Dr Emeka and patients, the film features interviews with the frontline workers who have been treating young COVID-19 patients.

Tom Williamson, physiotherapist at Epsom and St Helier Hospital Trust who features in the film, said:

We're treating more and more young COVID-19 patients who are still suffering with long COVID and it's heart-breaking to see. Patients are experiencing extreme fatigue which means they can no longer do the things they love, and some have had to quit work.

My message is clear, COVID-19 can affect anyone, regardless of your age or lifestyle so please get vaccinated. It's the best way to protect yourself and others.

The government is working closely with the NHS to make it as easy as possible to get a vaccine, including through 'grab a jab' pop-up vaccine sites across the country, such as London-based nightclub Heaven, as well as football stadiums and festivals up and down the country.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Vaccines are building a wall of defence in the UK and allowing us to safely live with this virus without restrictions.

Regardless of whether you're young, fit and healthy, these harrowing stories really show that COVID-19 can affect anyone. I

encourage everyone to come forward for both their jabs as quickly as possible as vaccines are the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones from serious illness.

Advice and information on the benefits of vaccination have been shared at every opportunity, including through a range of partnerships with industries catering for predominantly younger audiences.

This work has included partnerships with high-profile entertainment and sports personalities on short films encouraging people to get the jab, such as film stars Jim Broadbent and Thandiwe Newton, and football figures Harry Redknapp and Chris Kamara.

The government has also partnered with dating apps, social media platforms and large companies, such as Uber, Asda and Deliveroo, on adverts and incentives to get the vaccine. For example, Asda will offer £10 vouchers for their clothing brand George at select stores to 18 to 30-year-olds who spend over £20, and Deliveroo will be distributing thousands of £5 vouchers over the coming weeks.

Vaccines Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

There is no doubt the COVID-19 vaccination programme is having a major impact, keeping around 82,100 people out of hospital and saving an estimated 95,200 lives in England.

But we are seeing more unvaccinated young people in hospital now than ever before. Please don't delay – get your jabs to avoid a similar fate to these brave people who have shared their stories.

Vaccines are available free of charge and from thousands of vaccine centres, GP practices and pharmacies. Around 98% of people live within 10 miles of a vaccination centre in England and vaccinations are taking place at sites including mosques, community centres and football stadiums.

[PM call with Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani: 22 August 2021](#)

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke with the Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin

Hamad al-Thani.



The Prime Minister spoke to the Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, today regarding the situation in Afghanistan.

He thanked the Government of Qatar for its work in helping to facilitate ongoing evacuations from Kabul.

The leaders discussed cooperation on the diplomatic effort to stabilise the situation in Afghanistan and ensure any new government is inclusive and abides by its international obligations.

They agreed it was vital that the Afghan people continue to be supported with access to schools, hospitals and humanitarian assistance, and that the international community fully funds the aid response in Afghanistan and in the region.

The Prime Minister also looked forward to welcoming Sheikh al-Thani to the COP26 summit in November, noting the opportunities for Qatar to set ambitious emissions reductions targets.

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[PM call with President Erdoğan: 22 August 2021](#)

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke with Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.



The Prime Minister spoke to Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan today about the crisis in Afghanistan.

They discussed the importance of the international community working together to stabilise the situation and support Afghans in the country and in the region.

The leaders shared the view that any new government must be representative of Afghanistan's diverse population and protect the rights of women and minorities, and that the Taliban would be judged by their actions not their words on this.

They agreed that countries must commit to burden-sharing on aid and refugees, noting that United Nations coordination would be central to that effort.

The Prime Minister and President Erdoğan also discussed intensifying UK-Turkey cooperation on trade and tackling climate change, ahead of COP26.

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[Government launches UK-wide antibody surveillance programme](#)

- UK Health Security Agency to launch UK-wide antibody surveillance programme for the general public for the first time
- Home antibody tests available for up to 8,000 people a day across the UK who opt in to the service through NHS Test and Trace
- Data will improve understanding of the protection provided by antibodies generated following COVID-19 infection and vaccination

Thousands of adults a day will be given free access to antibody tests through a new national surveillance programme launched by the UK Health Security Agency next week, to help improve our understanding of immunity against COVID-19 from vaccination and infection.

For the first time, the programme will offer antibody testing to adults in the UK who test positive. From Tuesday, anyone aged over 18 will be able to opt in to take part when booking a PCR test through NHS Test and Trace. Up to 8,000 people who opt in and then receive a positive PCR result will be sent two finger prick antibody tests to complete at home and send back to a lab for analysis.

The UK Health Security Agency will work alongside NHS Test and Trace testing services in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to monitor levels of antibodies in positive cases across the UK. The data collected will help estimate the proportion of those who got COVID-19 despite developing antibodies as a result of having a vaccine or previously catching coronavirus.

The initiative could also provide insight into any groups of people who do not develop an immune response. The UK Health Security Agency will use the data to inform our ongoing approach to COVID-19 and provide further insight into the effectiveness of the vaccines against different variants.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Sajid Javid said:

Our new national antibody testing will be quick and easy to take part in, and by doing so you'll be helping strengthen our understanding of COVID-19 as we cautiously return to a more normal life.

I'm proud to see all parts of the UK uniting around this new initiative and working together to arm ourselves with even more valuable insights into how COVID-19 vaccines are protecting people up and down the UK.

Our phenomenal vaccination programme continues to build a massive wall of defence across the country – already preventing around 24 million infections and more than 100,000 deaths in England alone. I urge everyone across the UK to get both vaccinations as soon as possible.

All adults interested in the study are encouraged to opt in. Anyone taking part must take their first antibody test as soon as possible after receiving a positive PCR result, before the body has had time to generate a detectable antibody response to the current infection. The first test will determine the level of antibodies a person had before their current infection.

The second test should be taken 28 days after testing positive for COVID-19 and will measure antibodies generated in response to the infection. By comparing the two antibody test results, the UK Health Security Agency will

be able to see how well vaccinated individuals boost their immunity when they are infected and how this might vary with different variants.

Testing positive for antibodies does not mean someone is immune from COVID-19 and people must continue to follow the rules, get tested if they have symptoms and self-isolate if positive or are a contact of a positive case and have not received both vaccine doses, to prevent the virus from spreading.

Chief Executive of the UK National Health Security Agency Dr Jenny Harries said:

We are rolling out antibody testing across the UK to gain vital data into the impact of our vaccination programme and on immune responses to different variants of COVID-19.

This innovative programme is only possible thanks to the thousands of people who continue to help with studies on vaccine and treatment effectiveness each week.

The best way to protect yourself and those around you is by getting vaccinated. I encourage anyone who has not yet come forward to book their first and second jabs.

Dr Susan Hopkins, Public Health England's COVID-19 Strategic Response Director said:

Our testing armoury is stronger than ever now we are rolling out antibody testing to thousands of people in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland alongside the vast testing capacity we have built including our NHS Test and Trace system.

Antibody testing surveillance shows how health teams across the UK are dedicated to working together to find innovative ways to understand the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines and target future treatments for COVID-19.

The NHS has guidance on what you can do to look after yourself and treat any symptoms you may have following a positive PCR result. It remains vital people continue to get a PCR swab test if they have symptoms and self-isolate when asked by NHS Test and Trace. Individuals should not change their behaviour based on an antibody result.

Antibodies are part of the body's immune response to help fight off infection and are generated either after being infected or following vaccination. Antibody testing looks for evidence of this immune response, whereas PCR and antigen testing tells someone if they have the virus at the time of test.

Antibody testing will contribute to our understanding of the protection provided by vaccines. 87% of people aged 16 and over have now received their

first COVID-19 vaccine dose and 76% have had their second dose.

The government is working closely with the NHS to make it as easy as possible to get a vaccine, including through 'grab a jab' pop-up vaccine sites across the country, such as London-based nightclub Heaven, as well as football stadiums and festivals up and down the country.

Advice and information on the benefits of vaccination have been shared at every opportunity, including through a range of partnerships with industries catering for predominantly younger audiences.

This work has included partnerships with high-profile entertainment and sports personalities on short films encouraging people to get the jab, such as film stars Jim Broadbent and Thandiwe Newton, and football figures Harry Redknapp and Chris Kamara.

The government has also partnered with dating apps, social media platforms and large companies, such as Uber and Deliveroo, on adverts and incentives to get the vaccine.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

The UK government has launched a new antibody testing to those who opt in when booking a PCR test through Test Trace Protect in Wales, which will enable us to deepen our understanding of COVID-19.

I'm proud that Wales, along with the other three UK nations, are collaborating on such an important programme and I urge everyone to opt in and take advantage of the testing available.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Brandon Lewis said:

I would encourage as many people as possible in Northern Ireland to opt in to take part in the new national antibody testing programme when booking a PCR test.

Improving our understanding of COVID-19 is essential in supporting the UK's fightback against the pandemic.

In addition, with over 85% of those eligible in Northern Ireland having had their first vaccination and almost 80% fully vaccinated against COVID-19, I would urge the public to continue this great effort to ensure that they and their families are protected.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Iain Stewart said:

I'd urge everyone in Scotland to opt in for this new antibody test when booking a PCR test through Test and Protect. It's a quick and easy process and you'll be making a massive contribution to our

understanding of COVID-19.

Ensuring as many people as possible are tested and vaccinated is our biggest line of defence as we continue our journey out of this pandemic.

Notes to editors

- This is the first time antibody tests have been made available to the general public. Until now, antibody testing has only been available to specific cohorts for clinical or research purposes, and to some people across the devolved administrations working in professions such as in education, social care or the NHS.
- The initiative is for surveillance only and the numbers will be limited to 8,000 per day.
- The NHS has guidance on what you can do to look after yourself and treat any symptoms you may have following a positive PCR result. It remains vital people continue to get a PCR swab test if they have symptoms and self-isolate when asked by NHS Test and Trace.
- Antibodies take time to develop. Most people make antibodies within 28 days of being infected or vaccinated, but it can take longer. This survey uses two different antibody tests, one that can see past infection only and one that can see response to the vaccine. As an example, if an individual has had a COVID-19 vaccine but no prior infection, the first antibody test taken as part of this surveillance would likely display a negative antibody result in response to their new or past infection, and a positive result for the antibodies generated by their vaccine. Following the second antibody test take 28 days after the first, there would likely be a higher positive antibody result to the vaccine and a positive infection antibody result.

PM call with UN Secretary-General António Guterres: 21 August 2021

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke with the United Nations Secretary-General

António Guterres.



The Prime Minister spoke to United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres again today about the situation in Afghanistan.

He stressed that the UN must be central to both the humanitarian response to the situation in Afghanistan and international negotiations over the future of the country, and pledged the UK's support in that effort.

The Secretary-General updated about the concerning situation on the ground and the challenges faced by humanitarian workers. They agreed that securing the progress made in the last 20 years on development and civil society was vital, and the international community must ensure the rights of women, girls and ethnic minorities are protected.

They agreed to continue working closely together in the coming days, including through the UN Security Council.

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