

Booster bookings to be opened a month early

- Government and NHS updates booster booking system to allow people to book their jab a month in advance, making it easier and more convenient to get a vaccine
- Change to system means booster can be pre-booked before someone is eligible
- Booster programme continues at pace with more than 9.3 million top-up jabs already administered
- Immunity to COVID-19 reduces over time, particularly for older adults and at-risk groups

The government and the NHS have changed the booster booking system to make it even easier for people to get their jab.

From Monday 8th November, the [National Booking System](#) will allow someone to pre-book their booster appointment a month before they are eligible.

Everyone aged over 50 and all those most at risk from COVID-19 should get a booster six months after their second dose. Currently, someone can only book an appointment at six months.

From Monday, they will be able to book their appointment after five months. This means that someone could pre-book their jab for the day they reach the six month milestone, rather than waiting days or weeks for a convenient appointment.

More than 9.3 million people have already received their top-up vaccine, ensuring the vital protection they have secured from their first two doses is maintained over the winter months. This change to the booking system will further speed up the booster rollout, getting more jabs in arms and protecting our loved ones.

People can also book by calling 119 or get vaccinated at hundreds of walk-in sites across the country six months after their second dose without an appointment. Those eligible can use the NHS online walk-in finder to locate the most convenient site.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

COVID-19 vaccines are the best way to protect yourself and your

family ahead of a challenging winter and this change to the booking system will make it as easy as possible for people to book their booster jabs.

This will accelerate the booster programme, ensure the NHS is able to vaccinate people as quickly as possible, and importantly help more people maintain protection against COVID-19 as we know immunity will dip over time.

Please do not delay – come and get the jab to keep the virus at bay.

The colder weather traditionally leads to increased transmission of viruses and will be challenging for the NHS.

Vaccines give high levels of protection but immunity reduces over time, particularly for older adults and at-risk groups, so it is vital that vulnerable people come forward to get their COVID-19 booster vaccine to top-up their defences and protect themselves this winter.

The latest evidence from SAGE shows that protection against symptomatic disease falls from 65%, up to three months after the second dose, to 45% six months after the second dose for the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, and from 90% to 65% for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. Protection against hospitalisation falls from 95% to 75% for Oxford/AstraZeneca and 99% to 90% for Pfizer/BioNTech.

Although the vaccine effectiveness against severe disease remains high, a small change can generate a major shift in hospital admissions. For example, a change from 95% to 90% protection against hospitalisation would lead to doubling of admissions in those vaccinated.

The booster programme is designed to top up this waning immunity. Early results from Pfizer show that a booster following a primary schedule of the same vaccine restores protection back up to 95.6% against symptomatic infection.

Vaccines Minister Maggie Throup said:

The COVID-19 booster programme is making great progress – thank you to the NHS and everybody who has come forward so far to secure vital protection ahead of the winter.

I encourage everybody eligible for a booster and flu vaccine to book your jab as soon as possible to keep yourself and your loved ones safe over the coming months.

Last week, clinical guidance was updated to enable COVID-19 boosters to be given slightly earlier to those at highest risk, where this makes operational sense to do so. This includes care home residents who may have received their

second doses at different times to be vaccinated in the same session, as long as it has been five months since their second dose. It may also help with other vulnerable groups, such as housebound patients, so that they can have their flu and COVID-19 vaccines at the same time.

Vaccine confidence is high with data from the Office for National Statistics showing nearly all (94%) of those aged 50 to 69 say they would be likely to get their COVID-19 booster if offered, with the figure rising to 98% for those over 70.

NHS national medical director Stephen Powis said:

Thanks to the hard work of NHS staff well over seven million people in England have already received their lifesaving booster vaccine, as the NHS moved at pace to get jabs in arms, within less than 48 hours of getting updated advice from the JCVI.

While this winter is undoubtedly going to be different, the most important thing you can do is come forward for both your Covid booster and flu jab as soon as possible – now with the added convenience of booking in advance – making it even easier to protect yourself and loved ones.

Flu is another winter virus that can be serious. To give people the best protection over winter, those eligible for a free flu vaccine should come forward and book an appointment at either their GP practice or their local pharmacy, or take it up when offered by their employer or other healthcare provider.

The offer of a first and second COVID-19 vaccine remains open to anyone who is eligible. 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.

There are more than 500 extra vaccination sites now compared to April this year, with 1,697 vaccination centres in operation in April 2021, and over 2,200 vaccination centres in operation now.

Vaccines are also available for those aged 12-15 to offer the best possible protection this winter in schools, as well as over 200 vaccine centres.

The government has launched a nationwide advertising campaign, encouraging people eligible to get their booster and flu jabs to protect themselves and their loved ones and help reduce pressures on the NHS. This includes outdoor billboards, broadcast and community radio and TV.