

Half of all adults in UK receive first dose of COVID-19 vaccine

- Health Secretary hails strength of the Union as UK passes major vaccine milestone
- Matt Hancock calls on everyone to accept the jab when it's offered

Half of all adults in the UK have received their first dose of the (coronavirus) COVID-19 vaccine, the latest figures show.

The UK health services vaccinated a total of 26.8 million people between 8 December and 19 March with first doses, while 2.1 million people have had their second dose so far.

The rollout is continuing at pace and the UK is on track to achieve the Prime Minister's target of offering the vaccine to all over-50s by 15 April, as well as all adults by the end of July.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Vaccinating over half of all adults is a phenomenal achievement and is testament to the mammoth efforts of the NHS, GPs, volunteers, local authorities and civil servants in every corner of the UK.

It shows the strength of the Union and what can be achieved when we work together as one United Kingdom to protect those most at risk. But the job is not done yet.

During April, we will continue to vaccinate those most at risk and around 12 million people will receive their second doses as well. It is absolutely crucial people come forward as soon as they are eligible. When you get the call, get the jab, because the more people who are vaccinated the safer we will all be.

The pace of the rollout means even more people will soon develop strong protection from serious illness from COVID-19 infection, saving lives and significantly reducing pressure on the NHS, which supports the Prime Minister's roadmap to ease lockdown restrictions.

Around 4% of the adult population have had their second doses so far and there will be a strong drive over the coming weeks to vaccinate people with the second jabs within 12 weeks, as well as continuing to vaccinate those in the priority groups with first doses.

The UK government's Vaccine Taskforce secured early access to 457 million doses of the most promising vaccines on behalf of the whole of the UK, Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories. This allowed a co-ordinated and rapid deployment of vaccines to those most at risk.

Vaccines Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

I would like to thank everybody involved in this incredible vaccination programme across the whole of the UK for their tireless dedication to protecting the most vulnerable and saving lives.

This is a momentous occasion and while the vaccines are the best way out of this terrible pandemic, the battle is not yet over.

We continue to do everything we can to expand the vaccination programme even further and encourage people of all backgrounds and religions to get their jabs when eligible.

All vaccines being used in the UK have undergone robust clinical trials and have met the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's (MHRA) strict standards of safety, effectiveness and quality.

The Moderna vaccine has also been approved by the MHRA and will be deployed from the spring. Rolling reviews are also underway by the MHRA to assess the Janssen and Novavax vaccines.

Data from Public Health England's real-world study shows that both the Pfizer and Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines are highly effective in reducing COVID-19 among older people aged 70 years and over. We are already seeing a significant impact of the vaccination programme on reducing hospitalisations and deaths, and it is vital people come forward for their vaccine when invited.

The vaccines are available for free from thousands of vaccine centres, GP practices and pharmacies. Around 98% of people live within 10 miles of a vaccination centre in England, which includes mosques, Westminster Abbey and football stadiums.

Dr Nikki Kanani, NHS England's primary care director and a GP, said:

Thanks to careful planning and the huge efforts of NHS vaccinators, volunteers and everyone working behind the scenes, the roll-out of the NHS vaccination programme – the biggest in health service history – continues to be a huge success.

Their efforts meant the NHS had vaccinated half of all adults in England by Thursday, and as a GP and a vaccinator, it is source of great pride that we have now reached that major milestone across the whole of the UK.

I would encourage anyone who is invited to come forward and book their vaccine. It is safe, quick and effective, and by having your vaccine you will join nearly 23 million people across England who've now been protected.

Royal Pharmaceutical Society President Sandra Gidley said:

Vaccinating half of the UK population in such a short period of time is a huge achievement and I'm immensely proud of the role pharmacy teams have played.

Pharmacists have been at the forefront of COVID-19 vaccinations, developing new treatments, ensuring a safe supply chain, and supporting vaccination clinics across the health service.

I want to thank pharmacists working up and down the country in every setting, from large hospitals to those providing vaccinations in village halls, for their amazing efforts and for rising to the challenge during a time of national crisis.

As we look to build on this success, pharmacists will continue to play a vital role in encouraging uptake of vaccines, particularly in communities where there are significant health challenges.

Professor Martin Marshall, Chair of the Royal College of GPs, said:

The hard work of GPs and our teams, along with colleagues across the NHS, to deliver the COVID-19 vaccination programme has been outstanding and ensured that vulnerable patients across the UK are protected from this terrible virus.

It is excellent news that half the UK adult population – 26.8m people – have now received the first dose of the vaccine, with around 75% of these vaccinations taking place in primary care. This is an incredible milestone and the efforts of GPs and our teams have been pivotal to achieving it in such a short space of time, and despite the complexities and challenges of delivering a new vaccination programme on such a large scale.

However, the hard work is far from over, and as long as there is supply, GPs and our teams will continue to vaccinate. Getting vaccinated is the best protection we have against this virus, and our best hope of getting back to a more normal life. We encourage patients to come forward for a vaccination when invited to do so.

Background information

1. There are a total of 52.7 million adults in the UK based on ONS data.
2. PHE's [real-world data](#) shows the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines.
3. Through the government's Vaccines Taskforce, the UK has secured early access to 457 million doses of 8 of the most promising vaccine candidates, including:
 - BioNTech/Pfizer for 40 million doses
 - Oxford/AstraZeneca for 100 million doses

- Moderna for 17 million doses
 - GlaxoSmithKline and Sanofi Pasteur for 60 million doses
 - Novavax for 60 million doses
 - Janssen for 30 million doses
 - Valneva for 100 million doses
 - CureVac for 50 million doses
4. To date, the government has invested over £300 million into manufacturing a successful vaccine to enable a rapid roll out.

The UK government is committed to supporting equitable access to vaccines worldwide. The UK is the largest donor to the COVAX facility, the global mechanism to help developing countries access a coronavirus vaccine, and has committed £548 million in UK aid to help distribute 1.3 billion doses of coronavirus vaccines to 92 developing countries this year.