

Health Secretary and DCMO statements on JCVI advice on third jabs

Press release

The government accepts JCVI's advice to offer a third COVID-19 vaccine to people with severely weakened immune systems



Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Today I have accepted the expert recommendations from the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation to offer a third vaccine dose to people aged 12 and over with severely weakened immune systems as part of their primary schedule following data from trials of those who are immunosuppressed.

We know people with specific conditions that make them particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 may have received less protection against the virus from two vaccine doses. I am determined to ensure we are doing all we can to protect people in this group and a third dose will help deliver that.

The NHS will contact people as soon as possible to discuss their needs and arrange an appointment for a third dose where clinically appropriate.

This is not the start of the booster programme – we are continuing to plan for this to begin in September to ensure the protection people have built from vaccines is maintained over time and ahead of the winter. We will prioritise those most at risk to COVID-19, including those who are eligible for a third primary vaccine, for boosters based on the final advice of the JCVI.

COVID-19 vaccines have saved more than 105,000 lives and prevented 24 million infections in England alone. They are building a wall of defence and are the best way to protect people from serious illness. I encourage everybody who is eligible to get their jabs as

soon as they can.

Professor Jonathan Van Tam, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, said:

We know there are people with severe immunosuppression for whom the first two doses of vaccine have not provided the same level of protection as for the general population. The degree of protection will vary by individual, according to degree of immunosuppression and the underlying reasons for that.

So I welcome the advice from JCVI to offer a third primary dose to those with severe immunosuppression, at a bespoke interval, advised by their specialist clinician, and guided by the UK's immunisation handbook, the Green Book.

We should be doing all we reasonably can to ensure that this group is not disadvantaged and a third primary dose is one step in this direction. We are also working hard to ensure there are other medical interventions that can be used in these groups, including specific treatments like antivirals and monoclonal antibodies.

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