

JCVI publishes advice on COVID-19 vaccines for autumn booster programme

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has published its advice on which vaccines should be used in this year's autumn booster programme.

All of the available boosters provide good protection against severe illness from COVID-19 and the Committee has emphasised that getting a booster in good time before the winter season is more important for those eligible than the type of vaccine that is received.

The vaccines advised for use in the autumn booster programme are:

For adults aged 18 years and above:

- Moderna mRNA (Spikevax) bivalent Omicron BA.1/Original 'wild-type' vaccine
- Moderna mRNA (Spikevax) Original 'wild-type' vaccine
- Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA (Comirnaty) Original 'wild-type' vaccine
- in exceptional circumstances, the Novavax Matrix-M adjuvanted wild-type vaccine (Nuvaxovid) may be used when no alternative clinically suitable UK-approved COVID-19 vaccine is available

For people aged 12 to 17 years:

- Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA (Comirnaty) Original 'wild-type' vaccine

For people aged 5 to 11 years:

- Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA (Comirnaty) Original 'wild-type' vaccine paediatric formulation

'Bivalent' vaccines have been developed by global manufacturers since the emergence and dominance of the Omicron variant. These vaccines contain two different antigens (substances that induce an immune response) based on two different COVID-19 strains, or variants. The original mRNA vaccines contain one antigen (monovalent), based on the original 'wild-type' strain.

Studies indicate the Moderna bivalent vaccine produces a marginally higher immune response against some variants than the Moderna mRNA Original 'wild-type' vaccine. The clinical relevance of these small differences is uncertain.

The committee will consider further bivalent vaccines for use in the programme as they are approved by the MHRA.

In its latest advice the JCVI has stated that, where feasible, it would be preferable for a single type of booster vaccine to be offered throughout the duration of the autumn programme for simplicity of deployment.

Professor Wei Shen Lim, Chair of COVID-19 immunisation on the JCVI, said:

All of the available booster vaccines offer very good protection against severe illness from COVID-19. As more vaccines continue to be developed and approved, the JCVI will consider the benefits of including them in the UK programme.

It is important that everyone who is eligible takes up a booster this autumn, whichever vaccine is on offer. This will increase your protection against being severely ill from COVID-19 as we move into winter.

Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisation at UKHSA, said:

Although cases of COVID-19 are relatively low at present, we are expecting to see the virus circulating more widely during the winter months.

The booster is being offered to those at higher risk of severe illness and by taking up the booster vaccine this autumn, you will increase your protection ahead of the winter months, when respiratory viruses are typically at their peak.

NHS England will confirm details on how and when eligible people can access the autumn booster vaccine in due course.