

Most vulnerable could be offered booster COVID-19 vaccines from September

- The UK welcomes JCVI interim advice on who to prioritise for a third dose
- Pending further data and final advice, millions may be offered booster vaccine from September

Millions of people most vulnerable to COVID-19 may be offered a booster vaccination from September to ensure the protection they have from first and second doses is maintained ahead of the winter and against new variants, following interim advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).

The JCVI's interim advice is to plan to offer COVID-19 booster vaccines from September 2021, in order to prolong the protection that vaccines provide in those who are most vulnerable to serious COVID-19 ahead of the winter months. The 2-stage programme would take place alongside the annual flu vaccination programme. Further details of the flu vaccination programme will be set out in due course.

The final JCVI advice will be published before September and will take into account the latest epidemiological situation, additional scientific data from trials such as Cov-Boost, real-time surveillance of the effectiveness of the vaccines over time and emerging variants. The final advice could change from the interim advice as further data is analysed.

The government is working closely with the NHS to ensure that if a booster programme happens it can be deployed rapidly from September. Further details will be set out in due course.

Health and Social Care Secretary, Sajid Javid said:

The phenomenal vaccine rollout has already saved tens of thousands of lives and prevented millions of infections, helping to wrestle back control of the pandemic and ease lockdown restrictions so we can return to normal as soon as possible.

We welcome this interim advice, which will help us ensure we are ready in our preparations for autumn. We look forward to receiving the committee's final advice in due course.

We need to learn to live with this virus. Our first COVID-19 vaccination programme is restoring freedom in this country, and our booster programme will protect this freedom. We are working with the NHS to make sure we can rapidly deliver this programme to maintain protection for people in the winter months.

Dependent on final advice, the booster programme will be designed to protect as many vulnerable people as possible from becoming seriously ill due to COVID-19 over the winter period.

COVID-19 vaccines provide very strong protection against serious illness. There is good evidence that 2 doses of any COVID-19 vaccine used in the UK will provide strong protection against severe disease for at least 6 months for the majority, and there is some evidence that longer lasting protection may be afforded to some. As is common with flu, winter will lead to rising cases and further pressure on the NHS. The JCVI's interim position on booster vaccinations is to ensure the protection that has been built up in the population does not decline through the winter months, and that immunity is maximised to provide additional resilience against variants.

As most younger adults will receive their second COVID-19 vaccine dose in late summer, the benefits of booster vaccination in this group will be considered by the JCVI at a later time when more information is available.

Vaccines minister, Nadhim Zahawi said:

Our COVID-19 vaccination programme has been a roaring success, with almost 85% of adults across the UK receiving a first dose and more than 62% getting both doses.

We are now planning ahead to future-proof this progress and protect our most vulnerable from variants and flu ahead of the winter.

Vaccines are the best way to stay on top of this virus and I urge everybody to take up the offer as soon as possible.

The JCVI's interim advice is that a third booster jab is offered to the following groups in 2 stages:

Stage 1. The following people should be offered a third dose COVID-19 booster vaccine and the annual influenza vaccine as soon as possible from September 2021:

- adults aged 16 years and over who are immunosuppressed
- those living in residential care homes for older adults
- all adults aged 70 years or over
- adults aged 16 years and over who are considered clinically extremely vulnerable
- frontline health and social care workers

Stage 2. The following people should be offered a third COVID-19 booster vaccine as soon as practicable after stage 1 with equal emphasis on deployment of the influenza vaccine where eligible:

- all adults aged 50 years and over
- all adults aged 16 to 49 years who are in an influenza or COVID-19 at-risk group as outlined in the [Green Book](#)

- adult household contacts of immunosuppressed individuals

Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England, Professor Jonathan Van-Tam said:

Where the UK has reached so far on vaccination is truly fantastic. But we need to keep going and finish giving second doses to those remaining adults who have not had them; this is the best thing we can do prevent the disease from making a comeback which disrupts society later in the year.

Being able to manage COVID-19 with fewer or no restrictions is now heavily dependent on the continued success of the vaccination programme. We want to be on the front foot for COVID-19 booster vaccination to keep the probability of loss of vaccine protection due to waning immunity or variants as low as possible. Especially over the coming autumn and winter.

Fewer or no restrictions will mean that other respiratory viruses, particularly flu, will make a comeback and quite possibly be an additional problem this winter, so we will need to ensure protection against flu as well as maintaining protection against COVID-19.

The announcement of interim advice from JCVI is good news. It shows that the vaccine experts are thinking carefully about how best to use vaccination to protect the most vulnerable and ensure everyone's lives can remain as normal as possible for the autumn and winter.

Of course we have to be driven by data, and there will be more data from vaccine booster studies for JCVI to look at over summer, so we should all remember that this advice is interim and might change between now and September. However JCVI has clearly set out the broad direction of travel which I agree with, and which ministers have accepted.

The success of the vaccination programme is weakening the link between cases and hospitalisations. The latest analysis from Public Health England (PHE) and the University of Cambridge suggests that vaccines have so far prevented an estimated 7.2 million infections and 27,000 deaths in England alone.

The government met its target of offering a vaccine to the most vulnerable by 15 April and is on track to offer a first dose to all adults by 19 July, 2 weeks earlier than planned.

Everyone over the age of 18 and over is eligible to get a vaccine. By 19 July, all those aged 40 and over and the clinically extremely vulnerable, who received their first dose by mid-May, will have been offered their second dose.

Data from Public Health England (PHE) shows that COVID-19 vaccines are highly

effective against hospitalisation from the Delta (B.1.617.2) variant. The analysis suggests the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is 96% effective and the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is 92% effective against hospitalisation after 2 doses.

YouGov polling also shows the UK continues to top the list of nations where people are willing to have a COVID-19 vaccine or have already been vaccinated and ONS data published on 9 June shows that more than 9 in 10 (94%) adults reported positive sentiment towards the vaccine.

See JCVI's [interim advice on potential coronavirus \(COVID-19\) booster vaccine programme](#).

See more information on the [CovBoost trial](#).

Additional scientific data will become available over the next few months which will require further consideration by JCVI ahead of any final advice. These include:

- further data on the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines used in the UK and internationally
- clinical trial and real-world effectiveness data on the durability of protection beyond 6 months
- clinical trial data on immune responses following a third vaccination (booster revaccination)
- clinical trial data on reactogenicity and immunogenicity following booster revaccination with the same or alternative COVID-19 vaccines
- clinical trial data on other COVID-19 vaccines in development
- the emergence of any new variants of concern in the UK or internationally
- data on the duration of immunity following a primary course
- a better understanding of the immune correlates of protection
- data on the effects of on-going SARS-CoV2 circulation in the population and its potential to confer long-term public health benefits