

Most vulnerable to be offered COVID-19 booster vaccines from next week

- UK accepts advice from the independent JCVI on who to prioritise for a booster dose
- Further details on deployment to be set out in due course

Millions of vulnerable people are to be offered a COVID-19 booster vaccine from next week as the government confirms it has accepted the final advice from the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).

The programme will be rolled out to the same priority groups as previously. This means care home residents, health and social care workers, people aged over 50, those aged 16 to 49 years with underlying health conditions that put them at higher risk of severe COVID-19, adult carers, and adult household contacts of immunosuppressed individuals will be prioritised.

However, there will be flexibility in the programme, allowing all those eligible to receive their booster from 6 months after their second doses. This approach will allow more vulnerable people to be given their boosters quicker.

The move will ensure the protection vaccines provide for those most at risk of severe illness from COVID-19 will be maintained over the winter months. Data published by ONS yesterday shows people who have not been vaccinated account for around 99% of all deaths involving COVID-19 in England in the first half of this year. All 4 nations of the UK will follow the JCVI's advice.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Our vaccine roll-out has been phenomenal. It's vital that we do everything we can to prolong the protection our vaccines offer, particularly for those most vulnerable to COVID-19 as we head into the autumn and winter months. I have today accepted the advice from the independent experts at the JCVI to offer a booster vaccine to those most at risk.

The booster programme will start next week thanks to the extensive preparations the NHS has already made to ensure booster jabs can be rolled out as quickly as possible.

I urge all those eligible to get their COVID-19 and flu vaccines as soon as they can, so you have the strongest possible protection over the winter months.

Vaccinations will begin next week and the NHS will contact people directly to let them know when it is their turn to get their booster vaccine.

The JCVI has also advised that the flu and COVID-19 vaccines can be co-administered. The NHS will now consider where it's appropriate for co-administration to be used to support the roll-out of both programmes and where waiting to deliver one vaccine does not unduly delay administration of the other. It is important people take up the offer of both vaccines when they receive it, so people are encouraged to get both vaccinations as soon as possible rather than waiting for the possibility of getting them together.

People will be offered either a full dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine or a half dose of the Moderna vaccine, following scientific evidence showing that both provide a strong booster response. This will be regardless of which vaccine the individual previously had.

Where neither can be offered, for example for those who have an allergy to either vaccine, the JCVI advise that the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine can be used for those who received this vaccine for their first and second doses. The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is safe, effective and has already saved thousands of lives in the UK and around the world.

NHS England will outline further details on deployment shortly. Plans for the roll-out will use the existing networks in place for the COVID-19 vaccination programme, including:

- local vaccination services co-ordinated by primary care networks and community pharmacies
- vaccination centres across the country, ensuring people can access a booster dose regardless of where they live

Following the JCVI's interim advice, the NHS wrote to providers on 1 July to ask them to start preparing for a potential booster programme. Local NHS organisations, in collaboration with local providers, local authorities and regional teams, have worked over the summer to ensure these preparations are in place.

NHS plans include ensuring there is capacity across community pharmacy, vaccination centres and general practice to deliver booster jobs, that the NHS has the workforce in place to deliver the programme and measures to maximise the use of the NHS Estate.

Flu vaccination remains a priority. It has been recommended for staff and vulnerable groups in the UK since the late 1960s, with the average number of estimated deaths in England for the 5 seasons 2015 to 2020 at over 11,000 deaths annually. During the 2019 to 2020 winter season, 86% of deaths associated with flu were people aged 65 and over.

The JCVI advice has taken into account data from the government-funded COV-Boost clinical trial, looking at the impact of a booster dose of each vaccine on people's immune systems, as well as ComFluCOV, which is investigating co-administration of the flu and COVID-19 vaccines.

The latest data from Public Health England and Cambridge University shows vaccines have saved more than 112,300 lives and prevented 143,600

hospitalisations and 24 million cases in England.

Yesterday, the government announced that [people aged 12 to 15 in England would be offered one dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#) from next week, following advice from the 4 UK chief medical officers.

Over 4 in 5 adults across the UK have received both COVID-19 vaccine doses, and over half of all 16 and 17 year olds have already come forward for their first jab.

A total of 44,108,746 people have received 2 doses (89.2%) and 48,458,700 people have received one dose (81.2%).