

# New film shows Martin Kemp as Father Christmas in vaccine drive

- Martin Kemp stars as Father Christmas in a new film to increase COVID-19 vaccine uptake this winter
- Former EastEnders and Spandau Ballet member urges people to get their jabs as part of their Christmas preparations
- Booster programme is being accelerated with more vaccination centres and military support

Former soap star and member of Spandau Ballet Martin Kemp has joined the national effort to get people vaccinated – by appearing as Father Christmas in a new film released today (Tuesday 7 December).

The video shows Martin preparing for Christmas – booking the sleigh in for an MOT, polishing his boots, getting his beard in shape, and most importantly, getting his COVID-19 vaccine. The film is part of the government's ongoing campaign to remind people of the importance of getting booster and flu jabs to ensure they are protected as soon as they are eligible.

Vaccines are the best way to protect people against COVID-19 and, in light of the new Omicron variant and following advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), the government is expanding the booster programme to all adults over 18, with all those eligible being offered a top-up jab by the end of January, as well as halving the gap between doses to protect more people more quickly.

To speed up the vaccination programme, around 400 military personnel will be drafted in to support deployment, with 1,500 community pharmacy sites, additional hospital hubs, and pop-up sites opening in convenient locations across the country. Extra financial support to GPs, community pharmacies and primary care staff will help boost capacity and encourage more visits to those who are housebound.

Government's priority remains to protect the most vulnerable first so everyone over the age of 40 who received their second dose at least three months ago will soon be able to book an appointment for their booster jab. Younger age groups will be invited by the NHS in order of age in due course.

Martin Kemp said:

We all know the run up to Christmas can be one of the busiest times of the year – buying presents, decorating the tree, eating mince pies with family and friends. But I can't stress enough how

important it is to tick your COVID-19 booster or flu jab off your 'to do' list this festive season, among all your other preparations, to ensure that you can enjoy Christmas with your loved ones.

It's quick and easy and will keep us all protected as best as possible this winter. Now go book your jabs – Father Christmas said so!

Tomorrow [Wednesday 8 December], the UK will celebrate one-year since it became the first country in the world to administer an approved COVID-19 vaccine to Margaret Keenan in Coventry.

A total of 20 million people have had their booster or third doses in the UK. 51 million have had a first dose and 46 million have had a second dose. The COVID-19 dashboard will be updated at 4pm with the latest figures.

Vaccines Minister Maggie Throup said:

More than 20 million people have already had their booster jab, securing the vital protection they need to enjoy Christmas safely.

I am delighted to see Martin Kemp play his part, encouraging others to do their bit in this national mission. It's never too late to get your first and second dose – I encourage everybody to come forward to protect yourself and those around you.

The first real-world study on the effectiveness of booster vaccines against the Delta variant by the UK Health Security Agency shows top-up jabs boost protection back up to over 90% against symptomatic COVID-19 in adults aged over 50, two weeks after being vaccinated. Data from the CovBoost trial shows the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines being used in the UK as boosters give the best overall immune response.

It is not yet known how effective existing vaccines will be against the Omicron variant, but it is likely they will provide at least some measure of protection. Those who have received their booster are likely to have a stronger response.

Flu is another winter virus that can be serious. To give people the best protection over winter, those eligible for a free flu vaccine should come forward and book an appointment at either their GP practice or their local pharmacy, or take it up when offered by their employer or other healthcare provider.

The government is running a nationwide advertising campaign, encouraging people eligible to get their booster and flu jabs to protect themselves and their loved ones and help reduce pressures on the NHS. This includes outdoor billboards, broadcast and community radio and TV.

The offer of a first and second COVID-19 vaccine remains open to anyone who is eligible. Vaccines are available free of charge and from thousands of vaccine centres, GP practices and pharmacies. Around 98% of people live within 10 miles of a vaccination centre in England.

#### Background

- 'Father Christmas prepares' short film is available [here](#)