

Prime Minister issues vaccine call to arms ahead of winter

The Prime Minister has issued a call to arms ahead of winter, urging everyone over 50 to get their booster jabs when they get the call.

The booster programme is well underway with over four million booster doses already administered. The National Booking Service has had its busiest week of booster bookings, with nearly half a million jabs booked over Wednesday and Thursday alone.

The NHS will contact you to offer you a booster vaccine if you are eligible and anyone who receives an invite should book online or by calling 119.

Young people aged 12-15 are now able to book their jabs through the National Booking Service, with appointments available at 90 vaccine centres across the country from next week, with more to come next month.

The phenomenal national effort seen during the first phase of the vaccination programme has already saved around 130,000 lives, with almost 95 million doses delivered across the UK.

As set out in the autumn and winter plan, the winter months will lead to the increased transmission of viruses. Vaccines are our best line of defence but data shows that the natural immunity provided by vaccines will wane over time, particularly for older adults and those more at risk from Covid. Recent studies suggest protection against death falls from 95% to 80% for AstraZeneca after six months, and from 99% to 90% for Pfizer.

The booster programme is designed to top up this waning immunity for those most at risk over the winter months. A 15% drop in efficacy could lead to many more avoidable deaths and cases of severe illness from Covid. Early results from Pfizer shows that a booster dose can increase the protection from our vaccines back up to 95.6% against symptomatic infection. This additional protection is vital, and everyone aged over 50 or who is at high risk from Covid will be invited for their booster jab six months after their second dose.

Getting your booster dose will also help the NHS during the already challenging autumn and winter period. The second phase of the government's national campaign launched today, encouraging people to get their Covid and flu jabs as soon as possible.

Infection rates continue to rise across the country as predicted in the autumn and winter plan. The vaccination programme remains open to anyone who may not have received their first or second dose during the initial phase, and they are encouraged to come forward to protect themselves and others.

A one dose programme is underway for all 12 to 15 year olds, protecting young people from the catching and transmitting the virus, preventing them from

becoming seriously ill, and preventing further disruption to education.

The National Booking System is now open for 12-15s, with millions of letters to be sent to parents and guardians of children aged 12 – 15 over the coming weeks inviting them to book the vaccine online or by calling 119.

The winter is a challenging time for the NHS and, coupled with waning vaccine immunity after six months, it is vital that everyone eligible for a vaccine comes forward to receive their dose. Vaccines save lives, and are our best defence against Covid.

Prime Minister, Boris Johnson said:

Vaccines are our way through this winter. We've made phenomenal progress but our job isn't finished yet, and we know that vaccine protection can drop after 6 months.

To keep yourself, your loved ones, and everyone around you safe, please get your booster when you get the call.

We can and will beat this virus but only if we listen to the science and look out for each other. This is a call to everyone, whether you're eligible for a booster, haven't got round to your second dose yet, or your child is eligible for a dose – vaccines are safe, they save lives, and they are our way out of this pandemic.