

UK marks 132 million life-saving COVID-19 vaccinations in 2021

Around 132 million COVID-19 vaccinations were administered across all four nations of the UK in 2021, as part of the largest vaccination programme in British history.

It marks the end of a monumental year for the NHS, with over 1.6 million people in the UK receiving a booster or third dose in the final week of 2021 – meaning almost 34 million people now have the protection they need from the Omicron variant at the start of the New Year. Around 50 million received a first dose this year and over 47 million received a second of a COVID-19 vaccine. Over 90% of those aged 12 and over have now had their first dose, and 82.4% have had their second.

This week, the government confirmed it had met its target to offer all eligible adults in England the chance to get a COVID-19 booster jab by the end of December – with the latest data showing 28.4 million adults in England have received a top-up dose. 3 in 4 eligible adults in England have now received a booster.

Recent data published by the UKHSA shows just how important it is to get the jab, with people who haven't been vaccinated being up to eight times more likely to be hospitalised with COVID-19 and the booster vaccine was shown to be 88% effective in preventing people from ending up in hospital due to Omicron.

COVID-19 cases continue to rise across the country and the world – ONS data published on Friday shows 1 in 25 people in England had COVID-19 last week, which increased to 1 in 15 in London.

The government is urging people to exercise caution as they begin to make post-holiday plans, by doing regular testing and making sure to get their booster as soon as possible to protect against the variant.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

The COVID-19 pandemic has been one of the biggest challenges our health service has ever faced and our historic vaccination programme has been vital in helping us step up to meet this challenge.

132 million vaccinations in a single year is astounding and a true reflection of the fantastic work of our NHS and its volunteers – I want to thank each and every one of them.

But we need to make sure people continue to come forward for their life saving jab. As we go into the New Year, make sure you Get Boosted Now to kick off 2022 with the best possible protection from

Omicron.

The COVID-19 booster vaccination programme has been a national effort for both the NHS and the public, with tens of thousands of volunteers stepping up to support NHS staff and millions of people queuing up to secure the protection for themselves and others.

On 30 November, the government set out its ambition to offer all eligible adults the chance to get their top-up jab by the end of January. This target was brought forward by the Prime Minister and the NHS last month through the national Get Boosted Now campaign, aiming to offer all eligible adults a booster by the New Year in response to the emerging threat of the Omicron variant, to protect the public as quickly as possible.

The campaign led to a huge increase in vaccination rates, with over 8 million top-up jabs administered in just over two weeks in England (a 45% increase), between 12 December when the Prime Minister set out the new ambition and Thursday 30 December.

The NHS in England has broken record after record in that time – including the highest number of vaccinations ever recorded in a single day: 830,000 top-ups reported on Saturday 18 December. This was also the day the UK hit over one million vaccinations in total, including first, second, third and booster doses – jumping from 928,000 the previous day.

This week, the NHS ensured over 1.5 million appointments were still available between 27 December and tomorrow (Monday 3 January), allowing anyone eligible who hadn't yet had the booster the opportunity to book their appointment. Millions more slots are available beyond 3 January.

To meet the ambitious target and ensure the country was offered protection against the new variant, the COVID-19 vaccination programme was accelerated and scaled up significantly over the past month. This included:

- opening over 3,000 vaccination sites, with 180 new sites having opened in December – including at football stadiums, shopping centres and at Christmas markets, with extended opening hours and some sites working around the clock;
- sending over 30 million people invites from the NHS during 2021– including over 3.9 million letters, 26.7 million text messages and 14.7 million emails inviting people to book online;
- sending a text to everyone in the country urging them to get boosted;
- drafting in 750 armed forces personnel to support deployment, alongside a renewed drive that has meant the recruitment of tens of thousands of volunteers; and
- temporarily suspending the 15-minute observation period following Pfizer or Moderna booster jabs, where clinically safe and appropriate to do so, in order to get more jabs in arms.

Vaccines Minister Maggie Throup said:

The UK COVID-19 vaccination programme is something we can all be proud of – having provided tens of millions of people with protection from this deadly virus over the past year.

I want to thank the NHS and volunteers who have worked incredibly hard for this achievement.

To those eligible who have not yet come forward – Get Boosted Now to keep yourself and your loved ones safe as we begin the New Year.

While two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine provides strong protection against the Delta variant, data from the UK Health Security Agency shows two doses is not enough to protect people from Omicron – but a third dose provides around 70% protection against symptomatic infection from Omicron two to four weeks after the booster is given.

It is vital to get a first and second jab, in order to be eligible for a booster to get the vital protection against Omicron. Recent UKHSA data shows people who are unvaccinated are up to eight times more likely to be hospitalised than those who are fully vaccinated.

If someone has contracted COVID-19 and has not yet received their booster, after 28 days have passed they are encouraged to book their jab as soon as they can.

Those eligible for a booster vaccine who have delayed making an appointment because of other acute illnesses are also encourage to book as soon as they are fully recovered.

All adults can get the jab by booking online through the National Booking Service or by visiting their nearest walk-in vaccination centre.

Head of the NHS Vaccination Programme, Dr Emily Lawson, said:

The NHS COVID-19 vaccination programme has delivered more than 111 million life-saving doses across England, with three in four eligible adults having received their vital booster jab thanks to the rapid expansion of the booster programme over the last few weeks.

While more than 28 million people have already taken up the offer of a top-up dose, many people may not have yet been able to, for example because they have had COVID-19, and I would urge anyone yet to get their booster jab to book in as soon as possible.