

JCVI issues advice on third dose vaccination for severely immunosuppressed

This third dose should be offered to people over 12 who were severely immunosuppressed at the time of their first or second dose, including those with leukaemia, advanced HIV and recent organ transplants. These people may not mount a full response to vaccination and therefore may be less protected than the wider population.

This offer is separate to any potential booster programme. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) is still deliberating the potential benefits of booster vaccines for the rest of the population and is awaiting further evidence to inform this decision.

Immunosuppression varies widely in severity and duration. Many people who are immunosuppressed have lower levels of antibodies after coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination, as some studies have shown.

Preliminary data from the [OCTAVE trial](#) showed that almost everyone who was immunosuppressed mounted an immune response after 2 doses, as indicated by either antibodies or T cells. However, in around 40% of people, the levels of antibodies were low. It is not clear how much this may affect protection against COVID-19 as antibodies represent only part of a person's immune response.

People with severe immunosuppression are more likely to be severely ill if they do catch COVID-19.

Studies are ongoing to see how effective a third dose is for immunosuppressed people, but it is very unlikely to cause any harm. Therefore, on balance, the JCVI's view is that a third dose can be safely offered as it may increase their protection.

Professor Wei Shen Lim, Chair of COVID-19 Immunisation for the JCVI, said:

We want people with severely suppressed immune systems to have the best chance of gaining protection from COVID-19 via vaccination. Therefore, we are advising they have a third vaccine dose on top of their initial 2 doses, as we hope this will reduce their risk of severe outcomes such as hospitalisation and death.

The JCVI advises that for adults aged 18 and older, either the Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines be administered for the third dose, as a number of studies have reported an increased immune response in some immunosuppressed people after a third dose of an mRNA vaccine. For those aged 12 to 17, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is preferred.

The decision on the timing of the third dose should be made by their specialist. As a general guide, the third dose should usually be at least 8 weeks after the second dose but with flexibility to adjust the timing so that, where possible, immunosuppression is at a minimum when the vaccine dose is given.

This will enable a better immune response to be generated. For example, it is preferable to give a vaccine dose before someone undergoes chemotherapy, rather than during their treatment.

Those with less serious immunosuppression are not included in this advice but are likely to become eligible for another dose as part of a potential booster programme, pending further advice from the JCVI.

In the event of a booster programme, it is expected that severely immunosuppressed people will also be offered a booster dose, at a suitable interval after their third dose.

A third primary dose is an extra 'top-up' dose for those who may not have generated a full immune response to the first 2 doses. In contrast, a booster dose is a later dose to extend the duration of protection from the primary course of vaccinations.

ASRC session on the conflict cycle: UK-Canada joint statement

Thank you Madam Chair. This statement is delivered on behalf of the UK and Canada. We'd particularly like to thank Ms Zakharova, Mr Lecoq and Ambassador Zanier for sharing their insights with us. It is always helpful to hear about experience in other international organisations, from parliamentarians and from civil society practitioners on the ground.

This session is particularly timely as we mark the 10th anniversary of [MC Decision 3.11](#). The UK and Canada highly value the tools provided by the OSCE institutions, the Conflict Prevention Centre and field missions on early warning, early action, conflict resolution and conflict prevention.

We recognise the importance of Early Warning and Early Action in preventing conflict escalation and in saving lives. The UN and World Bank have estimated that a scaled-up international system for preventative action could also save up to \$70bn per year. And we have some excellent tools existing in the OSCE – such as the Early Warning Focal Point network, the OSCE Situation Room and the relevant mandates of the OSCE institutions, Secretary General and Field Missions.

Supporting the successful resolution of violent conflict is a priority for

the UK and Canada, and mediation is core to this support. Whether for preventing, resolving or transitioning a conflict towards greater stability, mediation is the engine that drives a successful peace process. We highly value the work of the OSCE's mediators and special representatives, as well as the support provided to them by the Conflict Prevention Centre's Mediation Support Team.

We also greatly appreciate the OSCE's contributions towards post-conflict reconciliation and building sustainable peace. The OSCE is built on the foundation of comprehensive security, a recognition that there are a multitude of intersecting factors that promote the prosperity and security of States and regions be they military transparency, human rights, security sector reform, rule of law, or anti-corruption efforts, to name just a few. The OSCE's network of field operations, ably supported by the Conflict Prevention Centre, and the OSCE Autonomous Institutions play a vital role in assisting participating States in implementing their OSCE commitments, and thus building sustainable peace.

We support efforts to strengthen these tools further. However, we recognise that all this support and all these resources, can only be as effective as we, the participating States, allow them to be. We must all demonstrate the political will to use these resources and to fully implement the OSCE principles and commitments that underpin comprehensive security for all our citizens.

Another important task for all of us is to ensure that gender analysis is included throughout the conflict cycle, and that we mainstream a gender perspective into all conflict prevention and resolution efforts. We know that a better understanding and response to the needs of different genders contributes to more sustainable peace. In this respect, we very much encourage the Organisation and participating States to implement the recommendations in the excellent [OSCE Toolkit on Women and Effective Peace Processes](#), and to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women at all stages of peace processes and at all levels of decision-making.

Peace processes are complex and multifaceted. They stretch from the pre-negotiation stage all the way through to the transition out of conflict, the implementation of a peace agreement and mandated transition and reconciliation processes. They encompass formal "track 1" aspects and informal "track 2 and 3" elements, such as civil society or grassroots engagement and advocacy.

Research has indicated and identified the need to create better links between track 3 and track 1 peace processes, in order to ensure that inclusivity and the role of women in particular is mainstreamed in a comprehensive way. Women's roles in the informal space of peace process, must be recognised and valued, while at the same time ensuring that the formal aspects of peace processes become an enabling environment for women's meaningful (not tokenistic) participation, inclusion and representation.

Sadly, women involved in peace processes also often face risks and threats to their safety and security including through gender-based violence and abuse.

The [Protection Framework for Women Peacebuilders](#) that was developed by the International Civil Action Network (ICAN) contains guidance on how to provide much needed protection. This framework was developed through conversations with women peacebuilders about their experiences and needs. By supporting and following this guidance we can help protect women peacebuilders to continue their work without threats or violence. Through their safe and active participation, we can help lay the groundwork for more sustainable peace

In conclusion, we would like to stress the importance of political will again. In many cases, we have the tools we need for building sustainable peace. What we require is the political will to strengthen these tools, and critically, to use them.

Thank you Madam Moderator.

UK announces £500,000 fund to support UNDP to respond to last year's Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

Press release

The UK has provided half a million pounds to help clear landmines in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, to make the area safe, prevent injuries and save lives.



- the UK has contributed £500,000 to recovery efforts and to help de-mine one of the most contaminated areas of land mines of the world
- these funds will help with training and personnel to support de-mining and the UK is now calling on other countries to support the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) initiative

The UK has provided half a million pounds to help clear landmines in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, to make the area safe, prevent injuries and save

lives following last year's conflict.

The funds given to the United Nations Development Programme will help with training and personnel to support mine clearance and make contaminated land safe for human use in and around Nagorno-Karabakh.

As a leading force for good in the region, the [UK was the first country to announce humanitarian support](#) following the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, with £1 million donated to the International Committee of the Red Cross to support those affected.

Now the UK is calling on other countries to support the UN initiative to help thousands of people affected by the conflict to rebuild their lives and return to the region after being driven from their homes by conflict or unexploded munitions.

Minister for the European Neighbourhood and the Americas, Wendy Morton, said:

The territories in and around Nagorno-Karabakh are amongst some of the most heavily mined in the world, with frequent reports of civilians losing their lives or suffering life-changing injuries.

The UK's donation will be used to harness the UN's expertise and reduce the risk to civilian life in both Armenia and Azerbaijan through the provision of training and technical demining support to those helping make the area safer. But there's more work to be done. That's why we're calling on our international partners to also support the collective effort needed if we are to ensure the safety of all people in the region.

The funding will be used by the UN to deliver support with local and national de-mining organisations in Armenia and Azerbaijan including through technical, strategic and management support.

A significant number of landmines and unexploded ordnance remains across the region which poses an indiscriminate threat to life. The UK continues to encourage both Armenia and Azerbaijan to commit to sign the Ottawa Treaty that seeks to eliminate the use of landmines around the world.

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[**Floods Minister chairs roundtable to**](#)

address flood risk along the Aire & Calder

Floods Minister Rebecca Pow has today visited Hebden Bridge and a natural flood management scheme near Skipton as she brought together a roundtable of MPs, local authorities, flood experts and water companies to examine the issue of flooding along the River Aire and River Calder.

Held in Hebden Bridge Town Hall, the roundtable was an opportunity for the minister to hear from local representatives, including MPs and council leaders in communities that have suffered the devastating impact of flooding, and to look at how the Government, Environment Agency and communities can work together to improve the resilience of the area in the future.

The Aire and Calder river catchment has been one of the worst affected by frequent flooding in recent years, with major flooding hitting the areas in 2012, 2015 and 2020.

Between 2015 and 2021, the Government invested £530 million in flood and coastal schemes across Yorkshire and the Humber. The region has received more investment than any other region, including £113.2 million in the Aire and Calder catchments.

It was recently announced that the region will benefit from more than £146 million investment in over 150 schemes in 2021/22 – an extra £40 million compared to last year – as part of the Government's plans to invest a record £5.2 billion in new flood and coastal defences across England over the next six years.

Speaking following the meeting in Hebden Bridge, Floods Minister Rebecca Pow said:

I would like to thank all those who attended today's meeting for their positive and productive contributions as we work together to better protect communities along the River Aire and River Calder from the devastating flooding they have suffered in the past.

We are making progress – a new flood alleviation scheme at Mytholmroyd will better protect 400 homes and businesses, while we're harnessing the power of nature in the upper catchments to slow the flow of water and reduce risk downstream.

However, I know that there is more to do and we're continuing to invest in places like Leeds and Hebden Bridge. We will boost the resilience of communities across Yorkshire as we face more extreme weather brought about by climate change.

Oliver Harmar, Yorkshire Area Director for the Environment Agency, said:

The Environment Agency is working with partners to reduce the risk of flooding across Yorkshire, and more than 66,000 properties have been better protected since 2015, including along the River Aire and River Calder which have suffered terribly in recent years.

As well as building more traditional flood defences downstream, such as walls and embankments, it has meant working with landowners, such as those at Broughton Hall on the upper Aire and Hardcastle Craggs upstream from Hebden Bridge to plant trees and create leaky dams to slow the run-off of heavy rain from the hills.

Across the region, 150 flood schemes are underway and we are committed to working with communities, councils, MPs and government to make communities along the Aire and Calder more resilient for the future.

Ahead of the roundtable, the Minister visited the Broughton Hall estate near Skipton, which is one of a number of sites across the Upper Aire catchment where natural flood management techniques are being implemented to reduce flood risk in downstream communities.

The landowner recently started the largest tree planting scheme in England, with the White Rose Forest planting 160 hectares of trees – the equivalent of 224 football pitches – between December 2020 and March 2021. Alongside tree planting and rewilding, further work includes soil aeration, the creation of leaky dams, gully blocking and culvert daylighting.

These works will not only help to hold water upstream and slow its flow into the River Aire to reduce flood risk downstream in Leeds and other communities, but will also contribute towards carbon capture and increased animal and woodland biodiversity.

The work is a partnership between the landowner, Leeds City Council, the Environment Agency, the White Rose Forest, Jeremy Benn Associates and Yorkshire Integrated Catchment Solutions (iCASP). It is part of the wider Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme programme, and is being delivered by the Environment Agency on behalf of Leeds City Council. Work has been delivered on a variety of sites across the catchment, in collaboration with numerous stakeholders, to reduce flooding in Leeds City Centre.

[ASRC session on arms control and CSBMs: UK statement](#)

World news story

Mr Jonathan Worgan, Deputy Head of EASP, reaffirms UK's full commitment to OSCE's conventional arms control and confidence and security building instruments.



Mr Jonathan Worgan, Deputy Head of Euro-Atlantic Security Policy Unit (EASP), reaffirmed the UK's full commitment to OSCE's conventional arms control and confidence and security building instruments. The speech took place at the Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC).

Mr. Chairperson, the UK remains fully committed to our existing conventional arms control and confidence and security building instruments. Where they are implemented fully, in letter and spirit, they increase transparency and trust, and reduce risk and the room for misunderstanding and unintended escalation. Where there is selective implementation, exploitation of loopholes, or application that is not in the spirit of the agreements, it degrades our instruments, reduces transparency and trust, and increases risk.

We continue to have significant concerns about the heightened tensions caused by the recent increased Russian military activity on Ukraine's border and in illegally annexed Crimea. We are disappointed that Russia did not, and still chooses not to, engage with OSCE processes and mechanisms available to provide the necessary transparency with regards to this activity.

Mr Chair, the Vienna Document is a vital confidence and security building measure. However, as we have said many times, there is an urgent need to modernise the Vienna Document to ensure it is fit for current purpose. Russia's ongoing failure to respond effectively to the legitimate concerns raised by its military build-up on Ukraine's border and in illegally annexed Crimea only serves to highlight this priority.

We continue to draw attention to the joint proposal to modernise the Vienna Document, supported by thirty-four participating States, as the first and most obvious step for those states who are serious about rebuilding trust and reducing risk. We continue to point to the [joint statement supported by forty-five participating States](#) at the Tirana Ministerial Council expressing their

determination to support constructive discussions on Vienna Document modernisation, with a view to making substantial progress on an update by the Stockholm Ministerial Council. And we continue call on Russia to change course, and to engage constructively to this end.

Mr. Chair, the security challenges we face are not the result of any lack of appropriate architecture. We do not need to reinvent any wheels. Instead we need the political will from all OSCE participating states to restore respect for fundamental OSCE principles, to fully and faithfully implement our existing politico-military instruments, and to update them beginning with modernisation of the Vienna Document.

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