

# World-first COVID-19 alternating dose vaccine study launches in UK

- Clinical trial looking into alternating COVID-19 vaccine doses launched today in the UK
- Current programme of 2 doses of the same vaccine over 12 weeks remains unchanged
- Innovative study backed by £7 million of government funding

Patients taking part in a new clinical study launching today will soon receive different COVID-19 vaccines for their first or second dose.

Backed by £7 million of government funding, the study will be the first in the world to determine the effects of using different vaccines for the first and second dose – for example, using Oxford University/AstraZeneca's vaccine for the first dose, followed by Pfizer/BioNTech's vaccine for the second.

The study, run by the National Immunisation Schedule Evaluation Consortium (NISEC) across 8 National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) supported sites, will also gather immunological evidence on different intervals between the first and second dose for a mixed-vaccine regimen against control groups when the same vaccine is used for both doses.

A same-dose regimen is currently implemented for the national COVID-19 vaccination programme, and there are no current plans for this to change. Anyone who has received either the Pfizer or AstraZeneca vaccination as part of the UK-wide delivery plan will not be affected by this study. They will receive their second dose from the same source and over the same 12-week interval.

The 13-month study will monitor the impact of the different dosing regimens on patients' immune responses, which have the potential to be higher or lower than from the same dose regimen. Initial findings are expected to be released in the summer. The study has received ethics approval from the Research Ethics Committee, as well as approval from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Should the study show promising results, then the government may consider reviewing the vaccine regimen approach if needed, but only if proven to be safe and recommended by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).

Minister for COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment, Nadhim Zahawi, said:

This is a hugely important clinical trial that will provide us with more vital evidence on the safety of these vaccines when used in different ways.

Nothing will be approved for use more widely than the study, or as

part of our vaccine deployment programme, until researchers and the regulator are absolutely confident the approach is safe and effective.

This is another great step forwards for British science, expertise and innovation, backed by government funding – and I look forward to seeing what it produces.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer and Senior Responsible Officer for the study, Professor Jonathan Van-Tam, said:

Given the inevitable challenges of immunising large numbers of the population against COVID-19 and potential global supply constraints, there are definite advantages to having data that could support a more flexible immunisation programme, if needed and if approved by the medicines regulator.

It is also even possible that by combining vaccines, the immune response could be enhanced giving even higher antibody levels that last longer; unless this is evaluated in a clinical trial we just won't know.

This study will give us greater insight into how we can use vaccines to stay on top of this nasty disease.

The study will initially have 8 different arms testing 8 different combinations, but more products may be added. The 8 arms include:

- 2 doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine at 28 days apart
- 2 doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine at 12 weeks apart – as a control group
- 2 doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine at 28 days apart
- 2 doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine at 12 weeks apart – as a control group
- the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine for the first dose, followed by the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for the second, at 28 days apart
- the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine for the first dose, followed by the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for the second, at 12 weeks apart
- the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for the first dose, followed by the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine for the second, at 28 days apart
- the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for the first dose, followed by the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine for the second, at 12 weeks apart

Over 800 patients are expected to take part in the study, referred to as the COVID-19 Heterologous Prime Boost study or 'Com-Cov', across 8 different sites across England – including in London, Birmingham and Liverpool.

Patients will be recruited over the course of February via the NHS COVID-19 Vaccine Research Registry, with vaccinations expected to start towards the middle of the month and initial results to be made available over the summer

period. The UK public can volunteer to be contacted about taking part in the study and further vaccine studies by [joining the registry](#).

The study has been classified as an Urgent Public Health study by the NIHR and is being undertaken by NISEC and the Oxford Vaccine Group, with funding of £7 million from the government through the Vaccines Taskforce.

Chief Investigator Matthew Snape, Associate Professor in Paediatrics and Vaccinology at the University of Oxford, said:

This is a tremendously exciting study that will provide information vital to the roll out of vaccines in the UK and globally. We call on those aged 50 years and above who have not yet received a COVID-19 vaccine to visit our website to find out more about the study and see if there is a study site near them.

If we do show that these vaccines can be used interchangeably in the same schedule this will greatly increase the flexibility of vaccine delivery, and could provide clues as to how to increase the breadth of protection against new virus strains.

National Clinical Lead for the NIHR COVID Vaccine Research Programme, Professor Andrew Ustianowski, said:

This is another exciting step forward in finding a variety of vaccine options for the UK and globally, for which the NIHR is integral to ensuring the participant recruitment for this study and the gaining of robust data on safety and effectiveness.

We need people from all backgrounds to take part in this trial, so that we can ensure we have vaccine options suitable for all. Signing up to volunteer for vaccine studies is quick and easy via the NHS Vaccine Research Registry.

Interim Chair of the government's Vaccines Taskforce, Clive Dix, said:

Thanks to funding from the Vaccines Taskforce, this study will give us valuable insight into how vaccines work together and could give us more flexibility as we continue to tackle this virus in the weeks, months and years ahead.

This is yet another example of the UK leading the way in vital research into COVID-19 – and something that people both in this country, and around the world, could benefit from.

[Volunteers for the study can sign up on the NHS website](#)

This study is separate to the COVID-19 national immunisation programme.

Vaccines are not being mixed as part of rollout of the national COVID-19 immunisation programme.

The trial sites include:

- London – St George's and UCL
- Oxford
- Southampton
- Birmingham
- Bristol
- Nottingham
- Liverpool

The Vaccines Taskforce was set up under the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in May 2020, to ensure that the UK population has access to clinically effective and safe vaccines as soon as possible, while working with partners to support international access to successful vaccines. This is to place the UK at the forefront of global vaccine research, development, manufacture and distribution.

The Vaccines Taskforce comprises a dedicated team of private sector industry professionals and officials from across government who are working at speed to build a portfolio of promising vaccine candidates that can end the global pandemic.

The Vaccines Taskforce's approach to securing access to vaccines is through:

- procuring the rights to a diverse range of promising vaccine candidates to spread risk and optimise chances for success
- providing funding for clinical studies, diagnostic monitoring and regulatory support to rapidly evaluate vaccines for safety and efficacy
- providing funding and support for manufacturing scale-up and fill and finish at risk so that the UK has vaccines produced at scale and ready for administration should any of these prove successful

Through the Vaccines Taskforce, the UK has secured early access to 407 million doses of 7 of the most promising vaccines so far. To date, the government has invested over £300 million into manufacturing a successful vaccine. In the Chancellor's Spending Review, published on 25 November, it was announced that the government has made more than £6 billion available to develop and procure successful vaccines.

Oxford University has been placed number one in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings for the fifth year running, and at the heart of this success is our ground-breaking research and innovation.

Oxford is world-famous for research excellence and home to some of the most talented people from across the globe. Our work helps the lives of millions, solving real-world problems through a huge network of partnerships and collaborations. The breadth and interdisciplinary nature of our research sparks imaginative and inventive insights and solutions.

Through its research commercialisation arm, Oxford University Innovation,

Oxford is the highest university patent filer in the UK and is ranked first in the UK for university spinouts, having created more than 200 new companies since 1988. Over a third of these companies have been created in the past 3 years.

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## [£11 million boost for energy entrepreneurs to turn green dreams into reality](#)

- £11 million government funding for UK's energy entrepreneurs to turn ideas into clean, green technologies that eliminate carbon emissions
- previous projects include tech to anchor floating offshore wind turbines, using ash waste in glassmaking and new solar heating systems, benefiting from grants of £72 million in total since 2012
- funding supports the UK's commitment to cut carbon emissions, level up the whole country and create new jobs as we build back better from the pandemic

Talented energy entrepreneurs have the chance to benefit from a share of £11 million government funding to turn their ideas into real products and services whilst eliminating carbon emissions.

Energy Minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan today (Thursday 4 February) announced the [latest round of the Energy Entrepreneurs Fund \(EEF\)](#), which seeks to drive forward new clean technologies across all sectors of UK industry, supporting the UK to eliminate its contribution to climate change by 2050.

This includes innovations that boost energy efficiency in people's homes, reduce carbon emissions and develop green transport as well as sourcing cleaner and greener ways to generate power and heat.

The UK's budding energy entrepreneurs are being urged to bid for the latest £11 million government funding, which will support between 15 and 20 projects, with each successful bidder receiving up to £1 million.

Successful projects could create hundreds of green jobs and kickstart millions-of-pounds-worth of private sector investment across the UK, helping the country to build back greener as we host the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow this November.

Previous recipients of funding include CCm Technologies in Swindon that is working with Walkers Crisps to implement carbon capture innovations in its factory processes, and Leeds-based C-Capture, which has developed processes to capture harmful greenhouse gases, including an innovative deployment of

its technology at the Drax power station in North Yorkshire.

Energy Minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

The UK is famous for its strong entrepreneurial spirit. We want to unleash this talent to drive forward green technologies across the UK, helping the public and businesses cut their carbon footprint.

The Energy Entrepreneurs Fund is backing the UK's next generation of inventors and innovators to turn their ideas into reality, with previous successful projects already helping drive down emissions across the country and creating green jobs as we work to build back greener.

Since 2012, the government's Energy Entrepreneurs Fund has awarded £72 million worth of grants, supported 156 projects and leveraged more than £500 million in private investment – a figure that is still growing.

Previous low-carbon projects that have reaped the rewards of government grants, include:

- **Axis Energy Projects, Aberdeen:** received £217,160 to develop an efficient and low-cost method of anchoring floating offshore wind turbines to the seabed that could enable offshore wind technology to be positioned in more remote and deeper parts of the marine environment that are inaccessible to fixed turbines and contributing towards UK commitments to produce 40GW of wind power by 2030
- **Energy Transitions Ltd, Cardiff:** received £160,793 to develop the Steel Zero system, which combines innovative stainless steel cladding panels with solar energy technology so a building's entire façade can produce clean and efficient heat for the spaces within
- **Glass Technology Services Ltd, Sheffield:** received £508,739 to lead a project with 6 partners to revolutionise glassmaking by replacing existing raw materials with ash waste from the biomass energy industry, reducing the high temperatures required in the glass production process and lowering energy requirements, costs and carbon emissions by up to 10%
- **Radfan, Newcastle:** received £20,250 to develop an innovative fan unit that fixes to the top of any central heating radiator and redirects the flow of warm air horizontally into the room, preventing heat from escaping, keeping people's rooms warm and helping to lower heating bills

UK Net Zero Business Champion, Andrew Griffith said:

I am thrilled to welcome the next stage of this excellent scheme, which is harnessing the creativity of British entrepreneurs to protect both the planet and UK industry by large and small innovations alike.

This is another great step from our government, investing in the

jobs of the future and the next generation of UK business who will lead the world in eliminating emissions from industry and driving forward our green industrial revolution.

UK Government Minister for Scotland, David Duguid said:

The UK government celebrates entrepreneurship. We are committed to rewarding innovation and hard work. Entrepreneurs bring solutions to problems, such as climate change, whilst creating new jobs and supporting our economic recovery from coronavirus.

With a long history of innovation, it is no surprise Scotland is producing lots of really exciting startups – including previous Scottish recipients of the Energy Entrepreneurs Fund.

I encourage Scotland's energy entrepreneurs to apply for a share of this £11 million UK government funding as we seek to build back better ahead of COP26 in Glasgow later this year.

Secretary of State for Wales, Simon Hart said:

The chance to share in this funding is fantastic news for promising Welsh energy entrepreneurs. The UK government is committed to achieving net zero carbon by 2050. We will do so by investing in pioneering projects, people and businesses, creating green jobs and opportunities for people across Wales.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis said:

Northern Ireland is a nation that embodies entrepreneurial spirit and is at the forefront of our efforts to cultivate a more environmentally sustainable future across the United Kingdom. With a share of this new £11 million investment, Northern Ireland's entrepreneurs will be able to help supercharge the United Kingdom's 'Green Economy', as we continue to work towards our goal of reducing our emissions to net zero by 2050.

Northern Ireland based projects such as Senergy Innovations and Minesto have already developed cutting edge technologies to harness natural resources for energy, a testament to our extraordinary local talent. I encourage all our budding entrepreneurs to apply for this scheme to help us build back greener from the coronavirus pandemic.

Tom White, CEO C-Capture, said:

Innovations in carbon capture technology are vital in helping the UK achieve its net zero target. Energy Entrepreneurs funding enabled C-Capture to further develop and deploy its technology, to demonstrate the performance and cost advantages which will be advantageous to companies seeking to decarbonise their operations.

The support we have received from the UK government has been of fundamental importance in developing a technology has the potential to capture millions of tonnes of CO2 per year.

John Blower, CEO Energy Transitions Ltd, said:

The Energy Entrepreneurs Fund acted as a catalyst that enabled us to take forward our Steel Zero solar façade from concept towards market readiness.

BEIS' support, both through the Energy Entrepreneurs Fund grant and the associated 'Incubation Support', which has assisted us in a range of areas, including branding, licensing and marketing, has had a transformational effect and helped us establish a platform from which we aim to create a global clean technology business.

John Baross, managing director Axis Energy Projects, said:

Axis Energy Projects was pleased to have received a grant from the Energy Entrepreneurs Fund. It allowed us to progress our low-cost anchoring method for floating offshore wind turbines not only on the UK Continental Shelf but on a global basis.

Such was our progress that we can now focus on offshore wind farms and on decarbonising existing and new offshore oil and gas production facilities. This would not have been possible without the grant award.

Christine Boyle, CEO Senergy Innovations, said:

For Senergy, the Energy Entrepreneurs Fund programme brought the perfect combination of critical early-stage funding and business acceleration support. The network of academic and business experts that were brought together to support our innovation journey was key to our success.

The wealth of experience both within CLT, the programme partner companies, and the international organisations they collaborate with, was key to delivering our early commercial success. A fantastic opportunity to turn an entrepreneur's idea into a global opportunity.



In 2019, the UK became the first major economy to legally commit to ending its contribution to global warming by 2050. This commitment has been reinforced by the Prime Minister's [ten point plan](#) and the [Energy White Paper](#), published in 2020.

The Energy Entrepreneurs Fund (EEF) is a programme funded through the BEIS £1 billion Net Zero Innovation Portfolio.

The EEF supplies innovation grants for small to medium sized enterprises and start-up companies to back the development and demonstration of disruptive technologies whilst also supporting our decarbonisation targets. [Read more details about the EEF.](#)

[Read a full list of previous successful projects.](#)

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## [Joint statement from Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Gove and Vice-President Šefčovič](#)

Press release

The virtual meeting took place with the First Minister and deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland.



The Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee co-chairs held a virtual meeting today with the First Minister and deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Vice-President Šefčovič reiterated their full commitment to the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement, and to the proper implementation of the Protocol – protecting the gains of the peace process, maintaining stability, and avoiding disruption to the everyday lives of the people of Northern Ireland and a hard border on the island of Ireland.

Both condemned unreservedly any threats or intimidation, noting that the safety and welfare of the people of Northern Ireland and that of our staff would always be the utmost priority.

After a constructive discussion amongst all parties, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Vice-President Šefčovič concluded that the UK and the EU would immediately work intensively to find solutions to outstanding issues, to be addressed through the Joint Committee.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Vice-President Šefčovič will keep in close contact as this work progresses, and will meet again next week in London.

Published 3 February 2021

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## [New Commissioner appointed to oversee education catch-up](#)

- Sir Kevan will lead work to ensure children and young people can recover learning lost due to the pandemic.
- Education remains the top priority, with government committing £300 million to help with catch-up this year, on top of the £1 billion announced in June last year.

The government has today announced the appointment of Sir Kevan Collins as the government's Education Recovery Commissioner, to oversee a comprehensive programme of catch-up aimed at young people who have lost out on learning due to the pandemic.

The reopening of schools is a national priority. The Prime Minister recognises that school closures have had a huge impact on children's learning and has pledged to work with parents, teachers and schools to develop a long-term plan to make sure pupils have the chance to make up their learning over the course of this Parliament.

Sir Kevan will lead this work. He is a prominent figure in education, having worked in the sector for over 30 years as a teacher, a Director of Children's Services and most recently as Chief Executive of the Education Endowment Foundation.

In his new role, he will work with government to deliver measures that will support children who have missed out on face-to-face education due to extended school closures.

This will include addressing factors such as curriculum content and quantity

of teaching time in the coming months, to ensure the impact the pandemic has had on learning is addressed as quickly and comprehensively as possible.

Earlier this month the Prime Minister committed to providing a huge programme of catch up, recognising that the disruption of this year has had a huge impact which will take more than a year to make up.

This will involve a further £300 million on tutoring programmes, building on last year's £1 billion Covid Catch Up fund, as well as potential plans for summer schools developed in partnership with the education sector.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

I am absolutely determined that no child will be left behind as a result of the pandemic.

Our top priority is to get schools open again and once they are, we will make sure that teachers and students are equipped with the resources and the time they need to make up for lost learning.

I am delighted that Sir Kevan has been appointed to lead this vital work – his experience and expertise will help ensure every young person is supported to catch up on their education and gain the skills and knowledge they need to be able to seize opportunities in future.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Sir Kevan brings a wealth of experience in education policy that I know will be invaluable in supporting all the young people who have been impacted by the pandemic.

He will be a tremendous asset to those young people, their families, and everyone working in education who have my lasting gratitude for their efforts to support young people throughout the pandemic.

I look forward to working with Sir Kevan as we deliver our existing National Tutoring Programme that is already reaching tens of thousands of young people who need it most, expand our catch up provision for this year and work on the longer term recovery to make sure every young person has the opportunity to progress and fulfil their potential.

Sir Kevan will report directly to the Education Secretary and the Prime Minister, and will consult closely with parents, teachers and schools as part of his role.

While schools have been closed to the majority of pupils, the government has

been doing everything possible to support children to learn from home. The Department for Education has purchased more than one million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged young people, supporting them to access remote education.

Oak National Academy was also set up last year and is backed by government – with 10,000 online lessons created by teachers available.

The government is due to set out further details on its approach to re-opening schools as part of its plan for leaving lockdown, which will be published in mid-February.

[Education Recovery Commissioner: role specification and terms of reference](#)  
(PDF, 145KB, 2 pages)

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## More than 10 million people receive first dose of COVID-19 vaccine in UK

- 9 in 10 of those aged 75 and over in England have received their first dose
- vaccines offered to all elderly care home residents and staff in England and Wales

More than 10 million people in the UK have received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, marking a significant milestone for the largest vaccination programme in British history.

Figures out today show the NHS vaccinated a total of 10,021,471 million people between 8 December 2020 and 2 February 2021, including 9 in 10 people aged 75 and over in England.

This is equivalent to vaccinating the total capacity of 111 Wembley stadiums in just 8 weeks and is an important step towards hitting the Prime Minister's target of offering vaccines to the top 4 priority groups by the middle of February.

These top 4 groups account for 88% of COVID deaths, which is why the vaccines will play such a crucial role in saving lives and reducing the demand on the NHS.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

This terrific achievement is testament to the monumental effort of NHS workers, volunteers and the armed forces who have been working tirelessly in every corner of the UK to deliver the largest vaccination programme in our history. Every jab makes us all a bit

safer – I want to thank everyone for playing their part.

Vaccines are the way out of this pandemic. The unprecedented national effort we have seen right across the United Kingdom means the majority of our most vulnerable people are now inoculated against this awful disease.

The UK government has worked rapidly to secure and deliver doses to all of the UK, demonstrating the strength of our union and what we can achieve together.

Vaccines have been offered to all elderly care home residents and staff in England and Wales, with staff returning to homes where residents may have been unable to get a vaccine due to medical conditions, or because of a local outbreak.

A study published in the Lancet today shows [the Oxford University/AstraZeneca vaccine provides a sustained protection of 76% during the 12-week interval between the first and second dose](#). It is also the first study to show the vaccine may substantially reduce transmission, suggesting those who have already been immunised with this vaccine cannot infect others.

All vaccines being used in the UK have undergone robust clinical trials and have met the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's strict standards of safety, effectiveness and quality.

The vaccination programme continues to expand, with thousands of vaccination centres open – ranging from GP and pharmacy-led services to hospitals and large-scale vaccination centres – to provide easy access to those eligible, regardless of where they live.

Vaccines Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

The UK's vaccination programme is in full swing and almost 1 in 6 people across the UK are already protected from serious illness.

The NHS is doing everything it can to protect the most vulnerable and will continue to expand the vaccination programme ever further in the coming weeks to save as many lives as possible.

The public has a vital part to play in the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines and the government has called on people to:

- help out: help those eligible for the vaccine by supporting friends, family and loved ones with their appointments, as well as volunteering to help those in the community
- join up: sign up to clinical trials for COVID-19 vaccines, as well as treatments

- stay informed: keep up to date with accurate and trusted NHS advice and make sure to share the facts with friends and family

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

There are many people and groups responsible for the UK's vaccination programme, and we owe our thanks to our brilliant scientists, to Kate Bingham and the Vaccine Task Force which has procured over 400 million doses of seven different types of vaccine, to the manufacturers and the delivery drivers, the pharmacists, the military medics, countless volunteers.

But to get this life-saving medicine into the arms of the nation at the kind of speed that we're seeing, we are relying on the doctors, nurses and all the staff of our NHS.

It is thanks to their effort – the most colossal in the history of our National Health Service – that we have today passed the milestone of 10 million vaccinations in the United Kingdom, including almost 90% of those aged 75 and over in England and every eligible person in a care home.

A total number of 10,021,471 have [received the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine](#) in the UK. 498,962 people have received their second jab.

Through the government's Vaccines Taskforce, the UK has secured early access to 407 million doses of 7 of the most promising vaccine candidates, including:

- BioNTech/Pfizer for 40 million doses
- Oxford/AstraZeneca for 100 million doses
- Moderna for 17 million doses
- GlaxoSmithKline and Sanofi Pasteur for 60 million doses
- Novavax for 60 million doses
- Janssen for 30 million doses
- Valneva for 100 million doses

To date, the government has invested over £300 million into manufacturing a successful vaccine to enable a rapid roll out.

The UK government is committed to supporting equitable access to vaccines worldwide. The UK is the largest donor to the COVAX facility, the global mechanism to help developing countries access a coronavirus vaccine, and has committed £548 million in UK aid to help distribute 1.3 billion doses of coronavirus vaccines to 92 developing countries this year.