

Young COVID patients share stories to urge others to get jabbed

- Government target hit as more than 1 million letters and texts have been sent inviting all 16 to 17-year-olds in England to get their jabs
- Latest figures show people aged 18 to 34 now make up more than 1 in 5 of those admitted to hospital with the virus
- Watch the [video](#)

Young coronavirus (COVID-19) patients have told their stories of battling the virus and suffering long-term debilitating effects as part of a new film encouraging people to get their vaccines.

The video features several patients who experienced serious symptoms of COVID-19 or developed long COVID, as well as the doctors and frontline staff who treated them, to warn of the dangers of the virus for those who are not vaccinated. It is narrated by A&E doctor, Dr Emeka Okorochoa.

It comes as people aged 16 to 17 in England are offered a COVID-19 vaccine by today (Monday 23 August), meeting the government's target. More than 360,000 have already been vaccinated and letters and texts were sent last week to the remaining people inviting them to book an appointment with their GP or visit their nearest walk-in centre.

All at-risk people aged 12 to 15 in England have also been invited for a vaccination and young people are encouraged to take up the offer as soon as possible to build vital protection before returning to school in September.

The latest figures show that hospitals are seeing a rise in unvaccinated young adults admitted with COVID-19. A fifth of COVID-19 hospital admissions in England are aged 18 to 34 – 4 times higher than the peak in the winter of 2020.

The patients who feature in the new short film have issued a rallying call: young people should take up the vaccine to avoid suffering a similar fate.

Quincy Dwamena, a 31-year-old videographer and support worker from East London, who spent 2 weeks in hospital with COVID-19 after putting off the vaccine, said:

I'm a healthy, young guy. I went to the gym often and have no underlying health concerns. I put off getting the vaccine because I thought the way I was living my life would mean there would be little to no chance of me catching the virus, or it would have

little effect.

But I ended up being hospitalised and thought I was going to die. My advice is to get the vaccine: don't put yourself and others at risk, I wish I'd got mine as soon as it was offered.

Megan Higgins, a 25-year-old special needs tutor from London who is suffering from long COVID, pleaded with others to get vaccinated. She said:

I was always careful about catching COVID-19, but I'm healthy and active so thought if I catch it, I'd probably brush it off. It's now been 8 months since I tested positive, and I can't even walk around the shops without getting exhausted. Long COVID is debilitating so please, get vaccinated. I wouldn't want anyone else to go through what I have.

Ella Harwood, a 23-year-old illustrator from London, said:

I'm young and fit but I was bed-bound for 7 months with COVID-19. Before I caught the virus, I was super active and had no health concerns, but I now suffer with asthma which I didn't have before and a number of allergies.

I fear I'll never be the same again but I'm making progress and I'm very grateful that I'm still alive. Please get vaccinated if you haven't already.

People aged 16 and 17 are able to get vaccinated at one of more than 800 GP-led local vaccination sites and NHS England has launched an online walk-in site finder to help this age group locate the nearest available centre. Further sites will come online over the coming days and weeks.

A total of 89,070,370 people have been vaccinated in the UK, including 47,573,794 people with a first dose (87.5%) and 41,496,576 people with a second dose (76.3%).

Uptake among under 30s is lowest in London where the interviews were filmed.

According to data from Public Health England, the highest COVID-19 case rates are among 20 to 29-year-olds with a case rate of 670.7 cases per 100,000 people in the 7 days to August 8, up week-on-week from 628.6.

More than 1 in 20 people aged 16 to 29 (6.3%) have had long COVID, which is higher than the national average. Many of these have said long COVID has had a major impact on their lives, especially the ability to exercise, work, and maintain relationships.

TV doctor and emergency medicine physician, Dr Emeka Okorochoa said:

As an A&E doctor, I've seen a lot during the pandemic. But nothing has shaken me like the sight of young, otherwise healthy adults, being rushed into our hospitals with COVID-19.

As well as their age, many of them have 1 other thing in common, they are unvaccinated. Vaccines truly are the way out of this pandemic and are the best way to protect everyone from the virus, so please get your vaccine.

Data from Public Health England (PHE) shows COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective against hospitalisation from the Delta (B.1.617.2) variant, the dominant strain in the UK. The analysis shows the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is 96% effective and the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine is 92% effective against hospitalisation after 2 doses.

In all age groups the odds of experiencing symptoms for more than 28 days after post-vaccination infection was approximately halved by 2 vaccinations.

COVID-19 vaccines have saved around 95,200 lives and prevented 82,100 hospitalisations and 23.9 million infections in England alone, the latest data from Public Health England and Cambridge University shows.

Alongside Dr Emeka and patients, the film features interviews with the frontline workers who have been treating young COVID-19 patients.

Tom Williamson, physiotherapist at Epsom and St Helier Hospital Trust who features in the film, said:

We're treating more and more young COVID-19 patients who are still suffering with long COVID and it's heart-breaking to see. Patients are experiencing extreme fatigue which means they can no longer do the things they love, and some have had to quit work.

My message is clear, COVID-19 can affect anyone, regardless of your age or lifestyle so please get vaccinated. It's the best way to protect yourself and others.

The government is working closely with the NHS to make it as easy as possible to get a vaccine, including through 'grab a jab' pop-up vaccine sites across the country, such as London-based nightclub Heaven, as well as football stadiums and festivals up and down the country.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Vaccines are building a wall of defence in the UK and allowing us to safely live with this virus without restrictions.

Regardless of whether you're young, fit and healthy, these harrowing stories really show that COVID-19 can affect anyone. I

encourage everyone to come forward for both their jabs as quickly as possible as vaccines are the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones from serious illness.

Advice and information on the benefits of vaccination have been shared at every opportunity, including through a range of partnerships with industries catering for predominantly younger audiences.

This work has included partnerships with high-profile entertainment and sports personalities on short films encouraging people to get the jab, such as film stars Jim Broadbent and Thandiwe Newton, and football figures Harry Redknapp and Chris Kamara.

The government has also partnered with dating apps, social media platforms and large companies, such as Uber, Asda and Deliveroo, on adverts and incentives to get the vaccine. For example, Asda will offer £10 vouchers for their clothing brand George at select stores to 18 to 30-year-olds who spend over £20, and Deliveroo will be distributing thousands of £5 vouchers over the coming weeks.

Vaccines Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

There is no doubt the COVID-19 vaccination programme is having a major impact, keeping around 82,100 people out of hospital and saving an estimated 95,200 lives in England.

But we are seeing more unvaccinated young people in hospital now than ever before. Please don't delay – get your jabs to avoid a similar fate to these brave people who have shared their stories.

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 and vaccinations are taking place at sites including mosques, community centres and football stadiums.