

V1 - 15th December 2020

Stakeholder update: COVID-19 vaccination programme in Dorset

Dear colleagues,

The health and care system in Dorset has been working very closely together on plans to prepare for the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out for some time. This has set us up really well in Dorset to deliver the [biggest vaccination programme](#) in the history of the NHS for the people of Dorset. NHS staff have been working round the clock to deliver the programme. We know that people are very keen to find out more about the developing COVID-19 vaccination programme. We will be sharing more detail in the coming days and weeks. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please get in touch with any queries here: communications@dorsetccq.nhs.uk

Introduction

Following extensive trials, the first safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine has been approved in the UK and is now available to priority groups. Vaccinations are being delivered according to [priority groups](#) identified nationally by the Joint Committee of Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). The roll-out of the programme nationally and locally will be phased, with people aged 80 and over as well as care home workers amongst the first to receive the vaccine, along with NHS workers who are at higher risk. The first stage of the roll-out of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine has been managed via a limited number of hospital hubs across the country, with GPs and primary care next.

The COVID-19 vaccination programme in Dorset

Last week, the NHS in Dorset started to vaccinate people against COVID-19 at Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. In the week beginning 14 December 2020, the first local vaccination services (based on primary care network (PCN) groupings) will start nationally and across Dorset with other services to follow over the coming weeks. See attached press release for further details.

Colleagues across the NHS in Dorset are doing an incredible job to deliver what it is the largest vaccination programme in our history, and we thank them once again for their efforts.

Key patient messages

The public have an important part to play to help the NHS to deliver the vaccination programme.

The key overarching messages for patients are:

- please don't contact the NHS to seek a vaccine, we will contact you;
- when we do contact you, please attend your booked appointments;
- If you can't make an appointment let us know as soon as possible and we can then offer the slot to someone else. You will be called again
- and please continue to follow all the guidance to control the spread of the virus and save lives.

It's really important we don't lose sight to of the things we all need to continue to do to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Self-isolation, regular handwashing, wearing a face covering and limiting social contact all remain critical to protecting ourselves, our loved ones and our communities.

Frequently Asked Questions

How will patients be invited for a vaccination?

When it is the right time people will receive an invitation to come forward. We know lots of people will be eager to get protected but we are asking people not to contact the NHS to get an appointment.

Is the NHS confident the vaccine is safe?

Yes. The NHS will not offer any COVID-19 vaccinations to the public until experts have signed off that it is safe to do so. The MHRA, the official UK regulator, have said this vaccine is very safe and highly effective, and we have full confidence in their expert judgement and processes.

As with any medicine, vaccines are highly regulated products. There are checks at every stage in the development and manufacturing process, and continued monitoring once it has been authorised and is being used in the wider population.

How long does the vaccine take to become effective?

The COVID-19 vaccination will reduce the chance of your suffering from COVID-19 disease. You may not be protected until at least seven days after your second dose of the vaccine.

Why is it important to get your COVID-19 vaccination?

Getting your COVID-19 vaccination as soon as you can, should protect you and may help to protect your family and those you care for.

The COVID-19 vaccine should help reduce the rates of serious illness and save lives and will therefore reduce pressure on the NHS and social care services.

Is the vaccine vegan/vegetarian friendly?

Yes, the Pfizer vaccine does not contain any meat derivatives or porcine products.

If, and when, further vaccines are approved we will publish information about known allergens or ingredients that are important for certain faiths, cultures and beliefs.

Who cannot have the vaccine?

The COVID-19 vaccination is not recommended for women who are pregnant. People with a history of severe allergic reactions in the past should not have the Pfizer vaccine.

People who are suffering from a fever-type illness should also postpone having the vaccine until they have recovered. People who have had the flu vaccine need to wait 7 days before having the Covid-19 vaccine.

How effective is the COVID-19 vaccine?

The phase three study of the Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine demonstrated a vaccine efficacy of 95%, with consistent efficacy across age, gender and ethnicity. This is all included in the information published by the MHRA, and Public Health England will also be publishing more resources for patients and professionals. People can be assured the NHS will ensure that they have all the necessary information on those vaccines that are approved by the MHRA before they attend for their vaccination.

What is the evidence to show the vaccine is safe for BAME communities?

The phase three study of the Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine demonstrated a vaccine efficacy of 95%, with consistent efficacy across age, gender and ethnicity. Overall, among the participants who received the COVID-19 vaccine 82.1% were White, 9.6% were Black or African American, 26.1% were Hispanic/Latino, 4.3% were Asian and 0.7% were Native American/Alaskan.

I'm currently ill with COVID-19, can I get the vaccine?

People currently unwell and experiencing COVID-19 symptoms should not receive the COVID-19 vaccine until they have recovered.

Do people who have already had COVID-19 get vaccinated?

Yes, they should get vaccinated. There is no evidence of any safety concerns from vaccinating individuals with a past history of COVID-19 infection, or with detectable COVID-19 antibody, so people who have had COVID-19 disease (whether confirmed or suspected) can still receive the COVID-19 vaccine when it is their time to do so.

Are there any known or anticipated side effects?

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. Most of these are mild and short-term, and not everyone gets them. Even if you do have symptoms after the first dose, you still need to have the second dose. You may not be protected until at least seven days after your second dose of the vaccine.

Very common side effects include:

- Having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection. This tends to be worst around 1-2 days after the vaccine
- Feeling tired
- Headache
- General aches, or mild flu like symptoms

As with all vaccines, appropriate treatment and care will be available in case of a rare anaphylactic event following administration.

How many doses of the vaccine will be required and when?

You are required to have two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, 21 days apart. You may not be protected until at least seven days after your second dose of vaccine.

I have had my flu vaccine, do I need the COVID-19 vaccine as well?

The flu vaccine does not protect you from COVID-19. As you are eligible for both vaccines you should have them both, but normally separated by at least a week.