

COVID-19 vaccination and severe mental illness

A guide for people with severe mental illness and their carers on what to expect from the Covid-19 vaccination programme

November 2022

The NHS is now providing COVID-19 vaccination boosters to priority groups in England. You may receive a letter or a text from your local NHS services or 'NHS vaccine' inviting you to book your vaccination appointments.

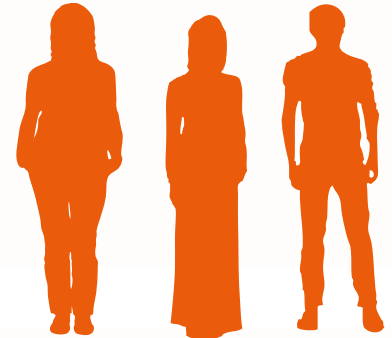
The COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective. Booster vaccinations are now being offered to everyone over 50 and people living with some health conditions, including those on their GP register living with severe mental illness and their carers.

We want to ensure that no one is left behind. You are able to book your booster online <https://www.nhs.uk/book-a-coronavirus-vaccination/>

It can be helpful if you have your NHS number to hand, but you don't need it to book.

If you're aged under 50, if you are asked if you are at high risk from COVID-19 when booking your appointment, please answer 'yes' or 'I think I might be

If you are currently a hospital inpatient, you should be offered your vaccination there.



What to expect

- The Coronavirus vaccine is **free of charge** to you. The NHS will not charge you for a vaccination and will not ask you for your bank details.
- Your **carer can attend your appointment with you if needed** and may be able to get the vaccine at the same time.
- All **vaccination centres are COVID-19 safe and cleaned regularly**. People will be socially distanced and you should wear a mask, unless you are exempt.
- The appointment should take around 30-45 minutes in total. Once you arrive at the centre there may be queues. If you need to wait in a quiet space or require any additional support, please let a member of staff know.

Reasonable adjustments

If you need any reasonable adjustments to make it possible for you to have your vaccination, please ask for them when you are contacted to make your appointment. Examples where this might be necessary include:

- A longer appointment time or one later in the day.
- Somewhere quiet to sit while you wait for your appointment.
- Asking if a carer/friend/your peer support worker could accompany you to your appointment.
- If you are housebound and not able to travel to a place that is providing vaccinations.
- If you need a sign-language service.



After the vaccination

- Some people may have mild discomfort after getting the vaccine. This might include soreness in the arm, tiredness or general aches or mild flu like symptoms. These don't usually last for very long. Symptoms following vaccination normally last less than a week, if they last longer you may need to take a COVID-19 test. If you are concerned you can call 111 or textphone use 18001 111.
- The vaccine dose takes about two to three weeks to take effect. People who have received the vaccine need to continue to practise social distancing and comply with all the current regulations.



Additional information

- None of the approved vaccines contains any animal product or egg. This means they are safe for people who are vegetarian or vegan, including people who do not have animal products on religious grounds.
- The NHS has produced guides in a range of languages; [you can find them here](#).
- To find out more about the vaccination please visit the NHS website [by clicking here](#).
- Rethink Mental Illness has a Covid-19 vaccination page which [can be viewed here](#), as well as a briefing summarising the findings from their Covid-19 vaccination survey for people with severe mental illness and their carers [here](#).