

Second COVID-19 vaccinations: frequently asked questions

When should I have my second dose?

The JCVI advice is that second doses should be given 8 to 12 weeks after the first dose. This takes into account the latest evidence, which indicates that a gap of 8 to 12 weeks is likely to provide better, longer-term protection than a shorter interval.

In response to the rising number of cases of the Delta variant, second doses are now being brought forward to 8 weeks for **all** adults. This is to ensure everyone has the strongest possible protection from the Delta variant of the virus at the earliest opportunity possible and builds on the earlier JCVI recommendation that second doses for people at greatest risk from Covid-19 should be brought forward to 8 weeks.

How can I bring my second dose forward?

Anyone who has an appointment booked for their second dose before 19 July should attend as planned. People who have appointments after this, and which are more than 9 weeks after their first dose, will be able to bring them forward. If you received your first vaccination through your GP practice, they will contact you to arrange your second dose, while those who used the NHS National Booking Service will be able to make an earlier appointment using the 'manage my booking' option at www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccine.

Can I get my second dose before 8 weeks?

No. The recommendation is that second doses should not be offered earlier than eight weeks unless there is a clinical reason why this is needed, such as for patients with planned immunosuppressive therapy. Second vaccinations cannot be brought forward for non-clinical reasons, such as going on holiday or travelling abroad.

Can I have a different vaccine for my second dose?

No, it is recommended that you have the same vaccine for both doses. This is because we do not know yet if using different vaccines will give people the same high levels of protection. Trials are underway to test this but at the moment there is not enough evidence to know if this would be as effective.

In exceptional circumstances, such as where someone has had a serious allergic reaction to their first dose, it is better to have a second dose of another vaccine than not have a second dose at all. However, this would only be done on the recommendation of a doctor.

I had the AstraZeneca vaccine and am worried about possible side effects from my second dose – can I have a different vaccine?

No. The JCVI have been very clear that people who had AstraZeneca for their first dose should also have this for their second vaccination, whatever age they are. So far, there have not been any confirmed cases of the very rare type of blood clotting that is being monitored after second doses and unless you experienced this very rare event after your first dose, you are best to have the same vaccine for your second dose. Evidence also shows that you are likely to experience far fewer side effects from your second dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine than your first dose.

What is the second dose guidance for pregnant women?

Pregnant women should have the same vaccine for both doses, like everyone else. Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are the preferred vaccines for pregnant women of any age simply because these have been used more widely during pregnancy in other countries and no safety concerns have been identified. However, there is no evidence to suggest that any of the other vaccines are unsafe for pregnant women and if you are pregnant and had AstraZeneca for your first dose, you should have this for your second as well.

I've read that the first dose gives you high levels of protection so why do I need a second?

Evidence shows that the second dose not only increases your protection against Covid but gives you longer-lasting protection so it is very important that you have both doses. Covid-19 can make you very seriously ill and have long-term effects on your health so getting the maximum protection possible will give you the best chance of avoiding this. For example, having two doses has been shown to be over 90% effective in preventing hospitalisation.

I felt unwell after my first vaccination, will this happen again?

Not necessarily. Everyone is different and even if you had side effects after your first dose, this doesn't mean you definitely will after your second dose. In fact, for the AstraZeneca vaccine, the evidence shows that there are far fewer side effects after the second dose.

Most side effects are mild and only last a couple of days. The important thing to remember is that having the second dose will help to protect you from becoming seriously ill from Covid, which can lead to people needing hospital care or dying.

Do I have to have my second dose at the same place as my first?

No. If you use the National Booking Service you will be given details of the closest available appointments for each dose. You can choose to book your first and second vaccinations at different centres if this is more convenient for you or you will be living somewhere different when it is time for your second dose.

If you have your first vaccination through your GP service, you will be invited for your second dose at the same place when this is due. However, if you prefer, you can use the national booking service to book your second appointment at a centre of your choice.

How does the NHS make sure there will be enough vaccine for me to get my second dose?

Second doses are planned very carefully to ensure everyone gets theirs at the right time. When your first dose is recorded on the system, this automatically allocates you a second dose so that it will be available at the right time. This means your second dose is effectively 'reserved' and will be available for you to have at whichever location you choose.