Mae Brechu yn achub bywydau
Vaccination saves lives

GIG CYMRU NHS WALES
Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru
Public Health Wales

Get vaccinated against COVID-19

A guide to COVID-19 vaccination

Some people are at greater risk of serious illness from COVID-19. This leaflet explains what the COVID-19 vaccine is, who is eligible and how to get it.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a virus. It spreads easily and can affect the lungs and airways. It is more serious in older people and those with certain health conditions. People at greater risk who catch COVID-19 are more likely to need hospital care.

Why do some people need to have the vaccine?

Like some other vaccines, levels of protection may begin to reduce over time. People who are at risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19 are offered a vaccination twice a year. These doses will help protect you for longer. Having the vaccine can help to reduce the risk of you needing to go to hospital due to COVID-19.

Scan me for more information on COVID-19

Who will be offered a COVID-19 vaccine?

The vaccine will be offered to people who are at greater risk if they get COVID-19. These are:

- people aged 75 and over
- residents in care homes for older people, and
- anyone aged six months and over who has a weakened immune system.

How does the vaccine work?

Vaccines work by telling your immune system how to fight a disease. Your immune system responds to the vaccine and makes antibodies. Antibodies help your body to fight an illness when you catch it. Your immune system will remember how to make these antibodies if you come into contact with the disease.

The COVID-19 virus can change, and protection from the vaccine may reduce over time. Having a COVID-19 vaccine is the best way to stay protected and reduce your risk of becoming seriously unwell.

Fact!
The COVID-19 vaccine cannot cause or spread COVID-19.

Which vaccine will I be offered?

You will be offered the most appropriate vaccine. This may be the same, or different from the vaccines you have had before. Vaccines are a safe and effective way to protect yourself.

How is the vaccine given?

The vaccine is given as an injection in the upper arm. For babies under 12 months, the vaccine is given by injection into the thigh.

When will the vaccine be offered?

You will be offered the vaccine twice a year, usually in the spring and autumn. You should be invited to have your vaccine around six months (and not before three months) after your last dose of the vaccine.

If you are not yet 75 but will be turning 75 during the time the vaccine is being offered, you will still be invited for your vaccination. You do not need to wait for your birthday.

Do I need the vaccine if I've had COVID-19 infection before?

Yes. If you have already had COVID-19, this will not always protect you against future infections. So you should still have the vaccine to ensure the best protection.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?

Yes, the COVID-19 vaccine is safe. It meets all safety standards. Once a vaccine is in use, its safety is closely monitored.

What if I have a weakened immune system?

If you have a weakened immune system, you may not make a strong immune response to the vaccine. However, it should help protect you against serious illness.

If you have a severely weakened immune system, you may be offered extra COVID-19 vaccines. This can help improve your protection. Your GP or nurse will advise you.

Did you know?
It is safer for your immune system to learn how to protect itself from a vaccine, rather than by catching a disease.

How will I get the vaccine?

The NHS will contact you to let you know when and where to have the vaccine. It is important to attend when invited. If you cannot attend, please let the booking team know using the details in your appointment letter. They can offer your appointment to someone else and arrange a new appointment for you as soon as possible.

If you think you might have missed the invitation, do not worry. You can speak to your GP surgery or health board immunisation team.

You can find more information on how to get the vaccination at: **gov.wales/covid-19-vaccination-programme** (external site).

If I am unwell, should I have the vaccine?

A cold or other minor illness is not a reason to delay your vaccine.

If you have a high temperature (fever) above 38.5C, please wait until you are better before you have the vaccine. However, you should try to have it as soon as possible. If you cannot attend your appointment, please cancel it and make a new one.

If in doubt, discuss this with the person giving you your vaccination.

What about giving consent?

If you are a parent or guardian with parental responsibility for a child or young person, you will be asked to give informed consent. This means giving permission for them to have the vaccine.

In some cases, young people under the age of 16 may be able to give consent themselves. This is if they are mature enough to fully understand what is being offered. Parents or guardians should be involved in the decision wherever possible.

The person giving the vaccine will always check they have the necessary consent first. They will be able to discuss the vaccine at the appointment and answer any questions.

What if I have fear of needles?

If you have a fear of needles, let the person giving you the vaccine know. They will support you.

Is there anyone who should not have the COVID-19 vaccine?

Very few people cannot have a COVID-19 vaccine. Most people with allergies can have the vaccine with no problems. The vaccine should not be given to anyone who has had a serious (life-threatening) reaction to:

- a previous dose of the vaccine, or
- any ingredient in the vaccine.

Make sure you tell the person giving you the vaccine if you have had a serious allergic reaction to the vaccine or its ingredients in the past.

Are there any side effects?

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects, but not everyone gets them. Most side effects are mild and may last a day or two. The most common side effects can include:

- a sore arm, swelling or redness where you had the injection
- tiredness
- headache
- joint or muscle pain
- chills

You may have a mild fever for two to three days after having the vaccine. A high temperature is unusual and may be caused by another infection or illness. If you are worried, speak to your doctor or nurse.

You can take paracetamol and rest to help you feel better. Follow the advice in the packet and do not take more than the recommended dose.

For young babies and children, you can give a dose of the correct-strength liquid paracetamol. This may help reduce their fever. Read the instructions on the bottle very carefully and give the correct dose for your child's age. It is not recommended to give liquid paracetamol before vaccination to prevent a fever.

Children under 16 should not be given medicines that contain aspirin.

Some people may get swollen glands in the armpit or neck on the same side as the arm where they had the vaccine. This can last for around 10 days. If it lasts longer, contact your GP surgery for advice. If you are due for breast screening (a mammogram) in the few weeks after the vaccine, tell the screening staff you have had the COVID-19 vaccine.

Very rarely, inflammation of the heart has been reported after some COVID-19 vaccines. This is called myocarditis or pericarditis. It has been seen mostly in younger men within several days after vaccination. Most people recovered and felt better following rest and simple treatment.

You should get medical advice urgently if you have:

- chest pain
- shortness of breath, or
- a fast beating, fluttering or pounding heart.

Rarely, people can have a severe reaction soon after vaccination. This can cause breathing difficulties and they may collapse. This is called an anaphylactic reaction, and it can also happen with other medicines and food. These reactions are extremely rare, affecting less than one in a million people. Staff who give vaccinations are trained to manage these reactions.

People who have an anaphylactic reaction can be successfully treated and usually recover within a few hours.

If your symptoms seem to get worse or if you are concerned, call NHS **111** or your GP surgery. If you do get advice from a doctor or nurse, make sure you tell them what vaccines you have had so they can assess you fully.

Please read the product information leaflet for more details on your vaccine, including all possible side effects.

Fact!
Hundreds of thousands of COVID-19 vaccines have been given in Wales. COVID-19 vaccines are safe!

Reporting side effects

See the back page of this leaflet for further details on:

- your vaccine, including possible side effects, and
- reporting suspected side effects through the Yellow Card scheme.

If you are worried about yourself or your child after the vaccination, you should speak to your GP or practice nurse.

Will the COVID-19 vaccine stop me from catching the virus?

Vaccination is one of the best ways to help prevent severe illness from COVID-19. It may take a few weeks for your body to build up protection against COVID-19 after the vaccination.

Like all medicines, no vaccine is 100% effective. Some people may still get COVID-19 despite having a vaccination. However, their symptoms should be less severe.

Are there any other vaccinations I need to have now?

It is important to catch up on missed vaccinations. If you or your child has missed a vaccination, talk to your GP, practice nurse or health visitor.

The COVID-19 vaccines can be given at the same time as other vaccines. For the latest advice on this, please visit **phw.nhs.wales/covidvaccine**

To see the routine immunisation schedules for Wales, visit **phw.nhs.wales/CompleteSchedule**

To help stop viruses spreading, remember to:



Catch it

Use a tissue when you sneeze or cough.



Bin it

Put the tissue in the bin as soon as possible.



Kill it

Wash your hands or use hand sanitiser.

The information in this leaflet is correct at the time of publication.

For the most up-to-date information, please visit **phw.nhs.wales/vaccines**

Further information

If you have any questions or want more information, you can go to **111.wales.nhs.uk** (external site). You can also talk to your doctor or nurse or contact NHS 111 Wales by calling **111**.

You can find out more information on vaccines offered in Wales at **phw.nhs.wales/vaccines**

To find out more about the vaccine, including its contents and possible side effects, go to **medicines.org.uk/emc** (external site). Enter the name of the vaccine in the search box. You can also see the patient leaflet online.

You can find the name of the vaccine at **phw.nhs.wales/covidvaccine**

You should report suspected side effects online at **www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard** (external site). You can also download the Yellow Card app, or call **0800 731 6789** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

To find out how the NHS uses your information, go to **111.wales.nhs.uk/AboutUs/Yourinformation** (external site).

Scan me to go to the Public Health Wales website

September 2026
Public Health Wales is the national public health agency in Wales.
We work to protect and improve health and well-being and reduce health inequalities for the people of Wales.
© Public Health Wales NHS Trust (with acknowledgement to UK Health Security Agency and Public Health Scotland)
ISBN 978-1-83766-942-4