

# Frequently Asked Questions about the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme



**Updated 9<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

The Cranborne Practice is working to keep patients up to date as we progress, so keep an eye on the [Practice website](#) or [follow us on Facebook](#). As well as these sources, we have established a telephone-based information source from which the community can get the latest vaccination updates: the Cranborne Practice Vaccination Information Line. Phone **01202 283695** to hear a range of options and answers, calls charged at your local call rate.

## ***Q What vaccine for COVID-19 is currently available?***

Both the Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines are now available, though supplies of the latter are limited. The Moderna vaccine was approved for use on 8th January 2021. **All vaccines are safe, offer high protection levels** and have been given regulatory approval by the MHRA.

In principle, the Government has secured access to seven different vaccine candidates across four different vaccine types, totalling over 357 million doses. This includes:

- 40 million doses of the BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine
- 100 million doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine.
- 7 million doses of the Moderna vaccine.

## ***Q Is the NHS confident the vaccines are safe?***

Yes. The NHS will not offer any COVID-19 vaccinations to the public until independent experts have signed off that it is safe to do so. The MHRA, the official UK regulator, has said that **both of these vaccines have good safety profiles and offer a high level of protection**. We have complete 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 used in the wider population.

Following suspensions by some countries of the COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca over suspected blood clots, the MHRA confirms that the benefits of the vaccine in preventing COVID-19 far outweigh the risks. People should still go and get their COVID-19 vaccine when asked to do so. [An information leaflet from Public Health England can be found on the NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group website by following this link:>>](#)

## ***Q Who will get vaccinated?***

The vaccination will be **prioritised to those most in need, particularly the elderly and vulnerable and those with pre-existing medical conditions**. The order in which people will be offered the vaccine is based on [advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccines and Immunisation \(JCVI:>>](#)

**FIRST DOSES:** We are now inviting patients in the 35 – 39 year age group to book an appointment for their first COVID-19 vaccination appointment. However, our records show that some of our patients in the 40+ age group have not yet taken up the opportunity of a COVID-19 vaccination. If you are aged 35 or over, please ensure you don't miss out on getting a vaccination appointment for your first COVID-19 vaccination as supplies become available.

SECOND DOSES: At present, we have been advised that we can expect supplies of vaccines to enable us to administer second doses approximately 11 weeks after the date of a first injection. This interval is in line with national guidance. .

***Q When and where will a COVID-19 Vaccine be available in East Dorset?***

Since mid-December, the vaccine has been offered at the area vaccination centre at St Leonards Hospital in Ferndown run by GPs in Verwood, West Moors, Ferndown and Wimborne, commencing with those people in the priority groups. The vaccine supply schedule will largely shape our weekly immunisation delivery. From the St Leonards site, over a 6 day week we are currently delivering between 1,000 to 1,200 doses per day related to supplies allocated to us. However, we have the capacity to administer up to 6,000 per week should supplies increase.

This vaccination programme is the biggest that the NHS has ever undertaken. However, the NHS is well-used to delivering millions of vaccines a year and is moving quickly to roll out this vaccine to those who need it, but we must remember this will be a marathon, not a sprint. **Offering vaccines to the people in the priority groups identified by the JCVI is likely to be done by late Spring.**

As more vaccine supplies have become available, NHS England has made arrangements for patients aged 50 and over to make an appointment for a vaccination through the national booking service. To do so you can either [follow this link to book your coronavirus vaccination online:>>](#) or call 119. People using this service will be directed to one of the NHS Vaccination Centres or pharmacy-led services established through NHS England.

***Q What do I need to do if I want to get vaccinated?***

Currently, there is nothing you need to do. You will be contacted with an invitation to book an appointment to be vaccinated based on eligibility based on your age and health. Keep on eye on our Community Vaccination Information Service page by typing [www.myvaccination.co.uk](http://www.myvaccination.co.uk) into your internet browser address bar. Or phone the Community Vaccination Information line on 01202 283695.

***Q How will I be contacted for my first vaccination appointment?***

Patients will be contacted by the Practice via text to offer an appointment at the St Leonards Hospital Vaccination Centre providing they have a mobile telephone number registered with us. Our texts will be sent from LakeRoad GP.

NHS England has made separate arrangements for patients aged 50 and over to make an appointment for a vaccination through the national booking services. If you have not received an invitation to book a vaccination slot and you are over the age of 50 and/or Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV), you can [follow this link to book your coronavirus vaccination online:>>](#) or call 119. People using this service will be directed to one of the NHS Vaccination Centres or pharmacy-led services established through NHS England.

Please let us know if, for any reason, you do not wish to take up the offer of a COVID-19 vaccination appointment at the St Leonards Hospital vaccination site. If you don't want to book an appointment right now, or you have already booked somewhere else, for example, the BIC, please let us know by selecting the relevant option from the booking web link in our text message.

If you are concerned that you may have missed a text due to poor mobile reception, please be assured that we will contact you either by a phone call or letter with appointment details, so you will not miss your slot.

***Q How will I know if a text message purporting to come from the Practice is genuine?***

We recognise that if you have received a text, you may be worried if it is genuine. Please don't phone us to ask if a text is valid. To help you, we have developed this [leaflet as a guide on how we will text you and what to do to:>>](#)

Remember, the vaccine is free of charge and at no point will you be asked to pay. The NHS will never ask you for your bank account or card details and will never ask you for your PIN or banking password. The NHS will never arrive unannounced at your home to administer the vaccine, nor will they ever ask you to prove your identity by sending copies of personal documents such as your passport, driving licence, bills or payslips.

***Q What do I do if I think a member of my family in one of the priority groups or I myself may have been missed?***

We have now offered all our patients aged 40 and over an appointment for a COVID-19 appointment at the St Leonards Hospital vaccination site. To speed up contact with our patients, we contact them via text message to book COVID-19 vaccination appointments, providing they have registered a mobile number with us. If you are aged 40+ but have NOT yet received a text or have not yet booked your COVID-19 vaccination, please contact us by email at [cranborne.reception@dorsetgp.nhs.uk](mailto:cranborne.reception@dorsetgp.nhs.uk) or, if this option is not possible, phone us on 01202 822825.

***Q How many injections of the vaccine will I need?***

The agreed dose interval period is set out in the [Chief Medical Officer's letter](#) dated 30 December 2020. Based on this guidance, both Pfizer and Oxford vaccines require two doses, and these will now be given 10-12 weeks apart. At present, we have been advised that we can expect supplies of vaccines to enable us to administer second doses approximately 11 weeks after the date of a first injection. This interval is in line with national guidance. Please note that the process of booking patients for their second vaccine represents a significant logistical challenge. It depends on the delivery dates of vaccine supplies.

Patients will be contacted by text, letter or phone call with details of second vaccination appointment booking arrangements. Please do not call the Saint Leonards Hospital or the surgery to ask when you will receive a second vaccination appointment. Patients will be contacted when it is their turn and in line with vaccine supplies allocated to us.

In the unlikely event you have not been contacted 11 weeks after the date of your first vaccine, please get in touch with us by email at [cranborne.reception@dorsetgp.nhs.uk](mailto:cranborne.reception@dorsetgp.nhs.uk) to let us know. Phone us if this option is not possible. In the meantime, when offered your second appointment, we would urge everyone to show up for both of their appointments for their own protection as well as to ensure we don't waste vaccines or the time of NHS staff.

***Q Does second dose vaccination need to happen at the same place as I have received my first dose?***

Guidance supplied by NHS England is:

- People using the National Booking Service (booking into a vaccination centre or designated community pharmacy) are given their closest available appointment locations. While we expect most people will book both appointments at the same location, there is an option for the second dose appointment to be booked at a different location. *This applies to the COVID-19 AstraZeneca vaccine only.*
- People who had their first dose through a GP service should be invited for their second dose through the same GP service. Locally this is the St Leonards Hospital Vaccination site.

***Q Can my second vaccination be scheduled early to vaccinate outside of the interval period?***

No, unless there are exceptional circumstances, as this is not in line with the guidance we have been given.

***Q. Can different vaccines be used for my first and second doses?***

No, the guidance provided to us is that the same vaccine used for the first dose must be used for the second, except in very exceptional circumstances.

***Q Will the vaccine protect me?***

The COVID-19 vaccine has been shown to reduce the chance of you suffering from COVID-19 disease. Each vaccine has been tested in more than 20,000 people in several different countries and shown to be safe. It takes a few weeks for your body to build up protection from the vaccine. Like all medicines, no vaccine is entirely effective, so you should continue to take recommended precautions to avoid infection. Some people may still get COVID-19 despite having a vaccination, but this should be less severe.

***Q For how long will my vaccine be effective?***

We expect these vaccines to work for at least a year – if not longer. This will be constantly monitored.

***Q Can I give COVID-19 to anyone once I have had the vaccine?***

The vaccine cannot give you COVID-19 infection, and a full course will reduce your chance of becoming seriously ill. We do not yet know whether it will stop you from catching and passing on the virus, but we expect it to reduce this risk. So, even if you have already been vaccinated, it is still essential to follow your local area's guidance to protect those around you.

To protect yourself and your family, friends and colleagues, you still need to:

- practice social distancing
- wear a face mask
- wash your hands carefully and frequently
- follow the current guidance at [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

***Q Are there any side effects to the COVID-19 vaccination?***

These are important details which the MHRA always consider when assessing candidate vaccines for use. For these vaccines, like lots of others, they have identified that some people might feel slightly unwell, but they report that no significant side effects have been observed in the tens of thousands of people involved in trials. More information on possible side effects can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/>

***Q What do you do with unused vaccines?***

We are doing all we can to vaccinate as many people as we can in the shortest possible time while ensuring that no vaccines are wasted. If any supplies are anticipated to be unused at the end of the clinic, we contact Priority Group patients who have yet to be given their first vaccination to see if they are available to attend at short notice. This approach has been successful in ensuring that precious vaccination supplies are not wasted.

***Q If I have already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine when it's available?***

The current guidance is yes. People who have had the virus should receive a COVID-19 vaccination, though individuals should wait until at least 3 weeks after the first onset of symptoms. As a reminder, the main symptoms of coronavirus are:

- **a high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- **a new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- **a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.

Most people with coronavirus have at least 1 of these symptoms.

***Q Can I get a COVID-19 vaccination privately?***

No. Vaccinations will only be available through the NHS for the moment. Any genuine invitation from your GP or other NHS body for the COVID-19 vaccination will NOT ask for any payment details such as bank details, credit card details, PIN numbers.

The NHS will never arrive unannounced at your home to administer the vaccine. The NHS will never ask you to prove your identity by sending copies of personal documents such as your passport, driving licence, bills or payslips. Anyone who claims they can provide you with a vaccine for a fee is likely to be committing a crime, and this should be reported to the Police online or by calling 112.

***Q I have read in the news that the NHS needs support from volunteers. How do I apply?***

Our rotas for the vaccine site at St Leonards Hospital are currently fully staffed, including with volunteers. Our staffing is determined by the supplies of vaccine that we are scheduled to receive. If we have more vaccines to administer, we may require more volunteers to help marshal traffic and direct patients through the immunisation site. Please email us at [cranborne.reception@dorsetgp.nhs.uk](mailto:cranborne.reception@dorsetgp.nhs.uk) if you wish to offer your services as a volunteer; we will add you to our list of people willing to assist.

***Q Why is it deemed safe for people to travel, possibly by taxis, to an indoor vaccination centre to get the vaccine when some of the waiting patients may have the virus?***

The NHS's goal is to get the maximum benefit for the most people in the shortest possible time and help save lives. To vaccinate as many people as quickly as possible, locally the vaccine has been offered at an area vaccination centre at St Leonards Hospital in Ferndown because the site is better suited to the logistics of transport, storage and vaccines that may require low temperatures.

***Q Do we have any information on the safety measures in place at St. Leonard's?***

We are committed to caring for you in the best possible way whilst keeping both patients and our team safe. Safety protocols are in place, including managing the flow of people into and out of the centre, use of hand sanitiser on entry, wiping down seats and strict adherence to guidelines such as the wearing of masks and social distancing measures.

***Q I am a frontline health and care worker. When can I get a COVID-19 vaccination?***

Dorset NHS and Local Councils are working to coordinate the approach to vaccinating frontline NHS and care staff and aim to offer access to first vaccinations to all staff who meet the criteria by the middle of February. We have received the following guidance from them related to our patients who identify as health and social care staff.

[Chapter 14a of the COVID Green Book](#) gives us a definition of which health and social care staff are deemed frontline. Eligible workers are those who are employed as:

- Frontline healthcare staff involved in direct patient care
- Non-clinical staff in health and care settings who may have social contact with patients but are not directly involved in patient care. This group includes receptionists, ward clerks, porters and cleaners
- Frontline social care workers, including
  - those working in long-stay residential and nursing care homes
  - social care staff directly involved in the care of their patients or clients
  - others involved directly in delivering social care such that they and vulnerable patients.

This guidance does not apply to private carers or carers who work in people's homes.

Young people age 16-18 years, who are employed in, studying, or training for health and social care work may be offered vaccination alongside their colleagues if a suitable vaccine is available. Younger people taking part in health and social care work as volunteers, interns, or work experience, should make all efforts to avoid exposure to infection; vaccination would not typically be required.

Dorset NHS and Local Councils have prepared a letter about the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme - Frontline Health and Care Staff. Patients who meet the above eligibility criteria should provide a copy of this letter to their employer to sort out their vaccination through the NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group. Please do not contact us to request a vaccination appointment. Your employer is responsible for registering their staff online. [A copy of the letter can be accessed by following this link:>>](#)

Staff who are considered frontline are given dates to access their vaccine at an appropriate site after registering. Your vaccination site will be one of the many local vaccination sites and may not be at St Leonards Hospital in Ferndown.

***Q Will the vaccines work with the new strain?***

There is currently no evidence that the new strain will be resistant to the vaccines we have, so we are continuing to vaccinate people as normal. Scientists are looking now in detail at the characteristics of the virus in relation to the vaccines. Viruses, such as the winter flu virus, often branch into different strains, but these slight variations rarely render vaccines ineffective.

***Q What can I do to help support the programme?***

We'd be grateful for your support as follows:

- please don't contact the NHS to seek a vaccine; we will contact you;
- when we do contact you, please attend your booked appointments;
- and please continue to follow all the guidance to control the virus and save lives.

***Q Can people pick what vaccine they want?***

No. Any vaccines that the NHS will provide will have been approved because they pass the MHRA's tests on safety and efficacy, so people should be assured that whatever vaccine they get, it is worth their while.



***Q I have a history of severe allergies. Can I still have the vaccine?***

Following close surveillance of the initial roll-out, the UK Regulatory Authority, the MHRA has advised that individuals with a history of anaphylaxis to food, an identified drug or vaccine, or an insect sting CAN receive any COVID-19 vaccine, as long as they are not known to be allergic to any component (excipient) of the vaccine. People with a history of a severe allergy to the ingredients of the vaccines should not be vaccinated.

You can access [the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccination Patient Information Leaflet here:>>](#)

You can access the [Oxford/Astra Zeneca Vaccination Patient Information Leaflet here:>>](#)

You can access the [Moderna vaccination Patient Information Leaflet here:>>](#)

If you still have any concerns about your individual situation after reading these leaflets, please email us at [cranborne.reception@dorsetgp.nhs.uk](mailto:cranborne.reception@dorsetgp.nhs.uk) for advice.

***Q I'm clinically vulnerable; when can I expect to receive a vaccine appointment?***

We have completed the process of inviting patients in the top 6 Priority groups to offer appointments for a COVID-19 vaccination at St Leonards. The Priority 6 group includes individuals aged 16-64 years with underlying health conditions, which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality. If you are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) but have not received an invitation to book a vaccination slot, please either [follow this link to book your coronavirus vaccination online:>>](#) or call 119. People using this service will be directed to one of the NHS Vaccination Centres or pharmacy-led services established through NHS England.

Please note that the guidelines for who, when, and where vaccinations are undertaken is set nationally, not by the Practice. The guidance for conditions considered clinically vulnerable is also set nationally, not by the GP Practice. [Follow this link to view the national guidance for persons considered as clinically vulnerable which we have uploaded to our website:>>](#)

***Q I'm the main carer for a vulnerable person. When can I expect to get a vaccine?***

We know that some of our patients are the primary carer for an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer contracted COVID. The [current published guidance from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation \(JCVI\)](#) recommends that those who receive a carer's allowance, or those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill, should be included in Priority 6 alongside people with underlying conditions.

We have contacted all our patients who meet the criteria for Priority 6 Group to offer appointments for a COVID-19 vaccination at St Leonards. This group includes individuals aged 16 years to 64 years with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality. This group also includes individuals who are informal primary carers to an elderly or disabled person.

Anyone with concerns that they meet the above Priority 6 cohort eligibility criteria for a vaccination and have not yet been contacted, should email the Practice at [cranborne.reception@dorsetgp.nhs.uk](mailto:cranborne.reception@dorsetgp.nhs.uk)

If you think you are a carer that meets this criteria, please do not phone the surgery to check! Please [use the form on the Practice website to advise us>>](#).

**Updated 9<sup>th</sup> April 2021**