

CORONAVIRUS VACCINE FACT SHEET

(Correct as of 25 January 2021 – for the latest information on COVID-19 visit

<https://northcentrallondonccg.nhs.uk/my-health/covid-19/>)

The Covid vaccination programme is well underway in Islington. Care home residents and health and care staff are being vaccinated at the moment as well as people over 80. The aim is to vaccinate everyone over 70 by the middle of February.

You will need two injections. These will be 12 weeks apart. It's important that you have both, as this will make you more resistant to the effects of coronavirus. The first injection will give you a good measure of protection from the virus from two weeks after the first dose, but you won't have the maximum protection until at least seven days after your second dose.

Who is getting the coronavirus vaccine first?

The government plans to offer a first dose of COVID-19 vaccine to every adult by September this year. People most at risk of serious harm from coronavirus are getting the vaccine first. These groups include older people, people with existing health conditions that make them more vulnerable, and frontline health and social care workers.

Why should I get the coronavirus vaccine?

Getting your COVID-19 vaccination as soon as you can should protect you from the virus.

Taking the vaccine should also help to protect your family and those you care for as the more people who have the vaccine the harder it is for the virus to spread through the population.

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. When infection rates have gone down, current lockdown restrictions can be lessened and society can begin to return to normal.

How will I be contacted when it's time for my vaccination?

1. All patients will be contacted by their GP to attend a local GP site as they become eligible. All the over 80s have been called on the phone. Moving forward, a text message based booking system will be used for those that have mobiles. Calls will still be made to those with no mobile and those who don't respond to the text.
2. Patients have also started to be invited to attend large vaccination centres by the National COVID Vaccination Booking Service. Eligible patients will be sent a letter inviting them to book via a website or by calling 119.

The National Booking Service looks at GP records of eligible people who have not yet had their first dose of the vaccine and sends them a letter. The Excel Centre in East London already hosts a large vaccination centre but other large scale centres that are more local will soon come online - a pharmacy run site at the Arc Centre on St Paul Street, N1 will open at the end of January.

The National Booking Service cannot tell if the patients on its lists have already booked an appointment at their local GP site. This means you may receive an invitation from the National Booking Service when you've already had your vaccination at a local health centre or you have already booked an appointment with your local GP site.

If you been invited to attend your local GP site but have also received an invitation from the National Booking Service to attend one of the large vaccination centres you may decide to attend wherever is most convenient for you. If at all possible you should try not to cancel appointments that are already booked.

(Vaccination lists are based on GP lists. If you are not registered with a GP please seek further guidance)

Which GP sites are providing covid vaccinations in Islington?

There are two local GP sites offering covid vaccinations:

1. Bingfield Primary Care Centre, 8 Bingfield Street, N1 0AL
2. Hanley Primary Care Centre, 51 Hanley Road, N4 3DU

What should I expect on the day?

You should arrive at the vaccination centre/ GP practice a few minutes before your appointment time **and not any earlier**. This is to ensure that the site can maintain social distancing in the waiting areas. You will also be required to wear a face covering (if you are able to) and to sanitise your hands on arrival. There will be spare face masks if you forget your own and plenty of sanitiser for you to use whenever you need to. You may be asked to wait for 15 minutes after the vaccination.

Please do not be late. This is essential to maintain safe social distancing at the centres.

Do I need to bring anything with me?

As well as a face covering (if you are able to wear one), you may wish to bring some form of ID to the centre. Apart from that you don't need to bring anything with you. The vaccine is free, you will not be charged for your vaccinations.

What if I can't get there on my own?

If you are housebound a home visit will be arranged for your appointments via your GP.

If you are not housebound but need support attending the appointment due to health and/or disability issues, a taxi transfer service is available from Age UK Islington. A carer, family member or friend who could support your access to the vaccination site may accompany you in the taxi. You must be referred to this scheme by your GP practice. (Patients who have access to the taxi card scheme or to other forms of transport to the vaccination site are not eligible for this service)

Can another person in my household/ my carer have the vaccination at the same time as me even if they are slightly younger?

The best thing to do would be to ask at the front desk when you arrive and are being booked in. Carers may well be asked to wait to be given their appointment by letter as per the vaccine roll out programme.

Should I attend my vaccination appointment if I have Covid symptoms, or if someone in my household has Covid symptoms?

No. If you, or anyone in your household has symptoms, you should not go for your vaccination. If you have to self-isolate, you should also not go for your vaccination. When your isolation period is over you should re-arrange your appointment by contacting your GP.

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. Two vaccines have been approved for use so far, one produced by Pfizer/BioNTech and one produced by Oxford/AstraZeneca. The MHRA, the official UK regulator, have said that both vaccines are very safe and offer high levels of protection.

In the UK any adverse effect to a vaccination is recorded by health professionals and these are collated and regularly reviewed to see if there are any themes. As of 20 Jan, over 4 million people in the UK have had a COVID jab, with minimal adverse effects.

Do the coronavirus vaccines contain pork gelatine or other animal products?

- No they don't. The approved COVID-19 vaccines do not contain any animal products.
- They do not contain common allergens such as latex, milk, lactose, gluten, egg, maize/corn, or peanuts.
- The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine does contain a tiny amount of ethanol (the compound found in alcoholic drinks) but much less than is found naturally in a banana or a slice of bread for example
- The Muslim Council of Britain have approved both vaccinations for individuals from Muslim communities. The British Board of Scholars and Imams provide further guidance [here](#).

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 won't have full protection until at least seven days after your second dose of the vaccine.

Very common side effects include: tenderness in the arm, feeling tired, headache, and mild flu like symptoms. As with all vaccines, appropriate care will be available in the very rare case of a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) following the injection.

Who cannot have the vaccine?

The COVID-19 vaccination is not currently recommended for women who are pregnant or children.

People who are suffering from a fever-type illness should also postpone having the vaccine until they have recovered

Can you spread COVID-19 to anyone if you 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. It is still important to follow the guidance in your local area to protect those around you.

I have already had Covid. Is it still worth having the vaccine?

Yes, you should still get vaccinated. We do not know how much immunity you get from having already had the virus. 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.

What about those people who don't want to have the vaccine because there are new strains coming through, and they are worried it won't be effective against those? Will the vaccines be changing to keep up with the changes in strains?

There is currently no evidence to suggest that the vaccines are ineffective against new strains of the virus. Our advice is for everyone to have the vaccine when they are invited to do so.

What does it mean when somebody has had the vaccine? For example can I stop social distancing?

It takes two weeks for the first dose of the vaccine to begin to work but the vaccine won't provide full protection until at least 7 days after you have had your second dose. It will reduce your chance of becoming seriously ill but we don't know whether it will stop you from catching or passing on the virus. You will still need to follow the social distancing guidelines in your local area to protect those around you.

One of the reasons children get the flu vaccine is to stop them spreading flu to other members of their family. However, children are not being offered the COVID-19 vaccination and the virus is not as dangerous for children. Does this mean they are less likely to be ‘super spreaders’ of COVID-19?

The current vaccines have not been tested on children, but it is possible that vaccines will be produced for children in the future. We do not know how easy it is for young children to spread the virus but we do know that it is incredibly rare for children to suffer from severe COVID-19. The most important thing is that we continue to follow the social distancing guidelines that help keep everybody safe.

What happens if I decide not to have the vaccine? Am I going to be penalised in any way?

There are no plans to make the COVID-19 vaccine compulsory. The UK operates a system of informed consent for vaccinations.

Previously the government were saying that the second dose would be administered within 3 weeks of the first one – as advised by the manufacturer. Now this has been changed to 12 weeks. I am concerned about how effective the vaccine will be, and it has created confusion and more cause for worry in our community.

The UK Chief Medical Officers have agreed a longer timeframe between first and second doses so that more people can get their first dose quickly, and because the evidence shows that one dose still offers a high level of protection after two weeks – 89% for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine and 74% for the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine. This decision will allow us to get the maximum benefit for the most people in the shortest possible time and help save lives.

More information

- [Coronavirus vaccine - NHS website](#)
- [Vaccine Knowledge Project](#)
- [Product information leaflet for vaccine from PfizerBioNTech](#)
- [Product information leaflet for vaccine from OxfordAstraZeneca](#)

If you have a question that is not covered in this resource you can contact the Healthwatch Islington advice and information service. Please visit our website for more information.

<https://www.healthwatchislington.co.uk/advice-and-information>