The NHS Covid-19 vaccination programme – key facts

1.   The vaccines are safe

The vaccines have been thoroughly tested to make sure they are safe and effective. They have been approved by the Medicine and Health Regulatory Authority, an independent body that follows international standards of safety, and they have gone through the same clinical trials and safety checks as all other licensed medicines.

Millions of people in the UK have had a Covid-19 vaccine and reports of any serious side effects, such as allergic reactions, have been very rare. No long-term complications have been reported.

2.   People at greatest risk from Covid-19 are being offered vaccinations first

The NHS is following the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) to make sure those at greatest risk from Covid-19 are vaccinated first. This aims to prevent deaths from Covid-19 and reflects the fact that the single greatest risk of death from COVID-19 is age.

So far, vaccinations have been offered to people in care homes, those aged 70 and over and people who are classed as clinically extremely vulnerable, plus frontline health and care workers. Once these groups have had their first vaccinations, we will move through the other groups, which are mainly in order of age.

3.   The NHS will contact you when it is your turn for a vaccine

The NHS will let you know when it's your turn to have the vaccine. Please help us to vaccinate everyone as quickly as possible by not contacting the NHS for a vaccination before then.

We will be working through people in the order recommended by the JCVI and you will be contacted by your GP practice or receive a letter from the NHS national booking system when it's your turn.

4.   Vaccines teach your body how to fight the virus

Vaccines teach your body how to fight a virus. They do not alter your DNA or genetic material and you cannot catch the virus from them.

The Covid-19 vaccines work by making a protein from the virus that helps to create protection. These proteins work in the same way they do in other vaccines and cause the immune system to make antibodies and cells to fight the infection.

5.   You need two doses, up to 12 weeks apart

People need two doses of the vaccines to give them the maximum amount of protection. This helps to build up better protection against Covid-19 symptoms. The second dose should be given 10-12 weeks after the first vaccination. If you don't have your second dose you will not be as well protected as you could be.

6. The vaccines won't give you Covid-19

You **can't** get Covid-19 from having the vaccine. It is possible to have caught Covid-19 and not realise you have the symptoms until after your vaccination, but the vaccine cannot give you the virus.

Some people may experience side effects such as a mild flu like symptoms, an aching arm or a headache. This is normal and can be treated with paracetamol. If you have any other Covid-19 symptoms or your fever lasts longer, stay at home and arrange to have a test. If you are concerned about your symptoms, you should call 111 or speak to your GP.

7. The vaccines do not contain any animal or foetal products

There are no foetal cells or animal products whatsoever in either of the Covid-19 vaccines. These have been approved as halal by Muslim leaders and leaders of the Hindu and Jewish faiths have also endorsed the vaccines.

8. There are a range of places where you can get your vaccination

Vaccines are being offered in a range of settings. These include local vaccination centres run by GPs, hospitals and community pharmacy centres. There are also four large vaccination centres in Bradford, Huddersfield, Leeds and Wakefield. People who are housebound will be contacted by their GP to arrange a vaccination at home.

When it's your turn for a vaccination, you will be contacted by the NHS to book an appointment at one of these options. Please help us to vaccinate everyone as quickly as possible by not contacting the NHS for an appointment until you are asked to do so.

9. You still need to follow the safety guidance after receiving your vaccine

The vaccines should protect you from becoming seriously ill with Covid-19. However, we do not know yet whether they will stop the virus spreading so even if you have had a vaccination, you might give it to someone else.

It is very important that you still follow the national guidance to help protect lives – particularly washing your hands, wearing a mask and keeping 2m apart.

10. The vaccine is free

The Covid-19 vaccination is only available through the NHS to eligible groups and it is a free vaccination.

You cannot pay to receive the Covid-19 vaccination privately. If you are asked to pay for a vaccination, this is a crime and should be reported to the police online or by calling 101.

11. You will receive your vaccine from a fully-trained vaccinator

It is not just nurses who can provide vaccinations. There are a wide range of staff delivering the Covid-19 vaccines to make sure people can get one as quickly as possible. Everyone giving the vaccinations has received full training and is qualified to do so.