



Guidance on rollout of Covid-19 vaccine

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The Department of Health has published guidance for health and social care staff in relation to the Covid-19 vaccination programme.

Updated guidance has been issued by the Joint Committee on vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) and follows the announcement that the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine has been granted approval by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

COVID-19 UPDATE

Chief Medical Officer Dr Michael McBride said: "Northern Ireland has currently 50,000 Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines which will begin rolling out to GP Practices from Monday 4 January. The GP programme will run alongside the ongoing vaccination programme and will prioritise those over 80 initially but will quickly work down through the priority groups recommended for vaccination by JCVI."

JCVI have now recommended that as many people on the JCVI priority list as possible should be offered a first vaccine dose as the initial priority.

Dr McBride said: "The four UK Chief Medical Officers agree with JCVI that prioritising the first doses of vaccine for as many people as possible will deliver the greatest benefit in the shortest possible time.

"First and foremost we must act to protect those most at risk of severe disease and death. The evidence shows that the initial dose of vaccine offers as much as 70% protection against the effects of the virus. Providing that level of protection on a large scale will have the greatest impact on reducing mortality

and hospitalisations, protecting the Health and Social Care system. It is the right thing to do for the public health.

“Everyone will of course receive their second dose to complete the course within the recommended timescale. We can all be assured by the level of protection that is available following the first dose and that the second dose will prolong the period of immunity. Within days to weeks, those vaccinated are much less likely to get severe illness. What we don’t know yet is whether they are at less risk of carrying the virus asymptotically and passing it on to others. It is therefore really important that everyone who is vaccinated continues to follow the advice on social distancing, respiratory and hand hygiene and all the steps we know work in controlling infection and protecting others.”

Concluding, Dr McBride commended all those involved in the rollout of the vaccination programme. He said: “I am delighted by the response by GP Practices who are keen to begin the vaccination programme and I wish them all well as they begin the rollout. Members of the public will be invited to receive the vaccine by their GP, there is therefore no need for them to contact their Practice.”

Notes to editors:

1. A letter ([HSS \(MD\) 93/2020 \(/publications/letters-and-urgent-communications-2020\)](#)) has issued for the deployment and guidance of Covid-19 vaccines.
2. Care home staff and residents will continue to receive their second dose as planned as this has already started and is scheduled in to Trust vaccination plans.
3. Those who have received their first vaccination and are due to receive their second dose before Monday 4 January, no further action will be taken, and these appointments are expected to continue as planned.
4. Those scheduled to receive their first vaccination from the 31 December onwards, an appointment to receive the second dose should be scheduled at 10 weeks.
5. For those who have received their first dose and were scheduled to receive their second after 4 January, the second dose appointment should be rescheduled where possible, but with discretion exercised based on individual circumstances.
6. [Priority groups \(/https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/priority-groups-for-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-advice-from-the-jcvi-30-december-2020\)](#) as recommended by JCVI.
7. JCVI have advised that the second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine may be given between 3 to 12 weeks following the first dose, and that the second dose of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine may be given between 4 to 12 weeks following the first dose.
8. For media enquiries please contact the DoH Press Office by email pressoffice@health-ni.gov.uk (<mailto:pressoffice@health-ni.gov.uk>).

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