



Community pharmacy vaccine service launches

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Health Minister Robin Swann has today launched a new community pharmacy Covid-19 vaccination service.

Speaking during a visit to Timoney Pharmacy in Lambeg, Health Minister Robin Swann said: “This is a significant day in our vaccination journey and I am delighted to formally launch this new Covid-19 vaccination service in community pharmacies across Northern Ireland.”

COVID-19 UPDATE

The new service will see almost 350 community pharmacies throughout Northern Ireland begin to administer the vaccine and will mean eligible members of the public will be able to avail of the vaccine at a location more local to them. At present this applies to those aged 50 years and over. This latest development follows the official opening of the Covid-19 vaccination centre at the SSE arena in Belfast earlier today.

As with previous phases of the vaccination programme, it is anticipated that demand for the community pharmacy Covid-19 vaccine service will be high and members of the public are asked to remain patient. Information on how to book a vaccination appointment at a pharmacy is published on the [Covid-19 NI vaccination website](https://covid-19.hscni.net/get-vaccinated/) (<https://covid-19.hscni.net/get-vaccinated/>).

Minister Swann said: "Community pharmacy teams have remained dedicated to providing the public with vital health care and support through what have been very challenging times. Pharmacists have a wealth of expertise, skills and experience which makes them very well-placed for delivering the Covid-19 vaccine. The addition of this new service will help speed up the roll-out of the existing programme by increasing capacity and local accessibility to vaccines for the general population, particularly for those who may find it more difficult to travel to one of the mass vaccination centres."

After receiving her vaccine at the pharmacy, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer Cathy Harrison said: "Community pharmacies have played a vital role throughout the pandemic and will continue to do so as they join the vaccination roll-out programme. Over the course of the past year, the general public has come to rely on community pharmacists more than ever before due to their accessibility and the addition of this new service will greatly benefit the people of Northern Ireland."

"Given the high demand for vaccines we anticipate that community pharmacies will be a popular option for those who are eligible so please be patient with pharmacy teams."

Joe Brogan, Head of Pharmacy and Medicines Management at the Health and Social Care Board said: "The COVID vaccination campaign is one of the ways that we as a society will move forward. It is vital that our population has every opportunity to access this service and it's fantastic to have almost 350 additional locations where people can book an appointment for a vaccine at a time and a place that suits them."

"I wish to recognise the tremendous response of community pharmacy teams in supporting the response to COVID and support our pathway out of the pandemic."

Gerard Greene, Chief Executive of Community Pharmacy NI said: "I am delighted to see the roll out of the community pharmacy vaccination programme. This will bring a further boost to the regional and national

vaccination programme and ensure that even more people in our communities are protected from the virus.

“The advantage in being able to receive the vaccine at participating local community pharmacies is their accessibility so people can get the vaccine at a location more convenient to them.

“We do ask the public for patience over the coming weeks as this new service gets up and running. Pharmacists will be vaccinating the public along with their usual work in ensuring the safe supply of medicines and provision of medical advice.

“As clinically trained vaccinators, community pharmacists are looking forward to begin vaccinating their communities and contribute even further to the wider Covid-19 response.”

As always, the pace of the roll-out of the vaccination programme will be dependent on the availability of vaccine supplies.

Notes to editors:

1. More information on how to book a vaccination at a pharmacy is published on the Covid-19 vaccination booking website: [Get Vaccinated | COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) Northern Ireland \(hscni.net\)](https://covid-19.hscni.net/get-vaccinated/) (<https://covid-19.hscni.net/get-vaccinated/>)

2. Current eligibility criteria for Covid-19 vaccination:

- those aged 70 or older at 31 March 2021
- those aged 65-69 at 31 March 2021
- those who are clinically extremely vulnerable aged 16 or over at 31 March 2021 and have a shielding letter
- those aged 60 – 64 at 31 March 2021
- those aged 55 – 59 at 31 March 2021
- those aged 50 – 54 at 31 March 2021
- a letter from your hospital specialist or your GP

- an email or letter from your employer – if you are directly involved in providing health and social care in Northern Ireland

If you have received multiple invitations, you only need to book once.

If you have received a letter from your GP inviting you to book a vaccination with them, you should contact them directly - do not use this service to book your vaccination online.

3. For media enquiries please contact the DoH Press Office by email: pressoffice@health-ni.gov.uk (<mailto:%C2%A0pressoffice@health-ni.gov.uk>).

4. Follow us on twitter [@healthdpt](https://twitter.com/healthdpt) (<http://twitter.com/healthdpt>).

5. The Executive Information Service operates an out of hours service **for media enquiries only** between 1800hrs and 0800hrs Monday to Friday and at weekends and public holidays. The duty press officer can be contacted on 028 9037 8110.

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