



The COVID-19 vaccination programme in Gloucestershire

More and more people are now being invited to join the millions already vaccinated against Covid-19. The COVID-19 vaccines are our best route to getting back to the things we like doing.

Here you will find the answers to the most commonly asked questions about the vaccination programme in Gloucestershire. For more information, including answers to some of these questions in other languages and formats, visit: <https://covid19.glos.nhs.uk/vaccinations>

EVERY VACCINATION
GIVES US

HOPE

How can I access a vaccination in Gloucestershire?

The bulk of vaccinations are being delivered through a network of 10 GP led 'Primary Care Network' (PCN) vaccination services. These centres are not on the national booking system; you will receive an invite directly from your GP practice, via text, phone, or letter.

The PCN sites in Gloucestershire are located at:

- **Cheltenham** - Cheltenham East Fire Station
- **Cotswolds** - North Cotswold Hospital, Moreton in Marsh
Cirencester Hospital
- **Forest of Dean** - Old Cinderford Health Centre
- **Tewkesbury** - The Devereux Centre, Tewkesbury
- **Stroud and Berkeley Vale** - Beeches Green Health Centre, Stroud
Rowcroft Medical Centre, Stroud
Vale Community Hospital, Dursley
- **Gloucester** - Rosebank Surgery, Stroud Road
Churchdown Community Centre

You may also receive a text or letter from the national booking system, inviting you to book an appointment via their website or phone number: www.nhs.uk/covidvaccination or **phone 119**. Using this system you may be able to book an appointment at one of several pharmacies across the county; Boots in Gloucester, Badhams Pharmacy in Bishops Cleeve, Cainscross Pharmacy in Stroud and Cirencester or Day Lewis and Allied Pharmacy in the Forest of Dean, subject to availability.

Some out of county services/centres may be available via the national booking system, but please be assured you do not need to travel outside of Gloucestershire to get a vaccination; your GP surgery will be in touch directly if they have not done so already, to offer you an appointment at your nearest PCN site.

Can I still access a vaccination if I've changed my mind?

It's not too late to change your mind! If you were invited to book a vaccination appointment in a previous age cohort, but you weren't sure you wanted to take up the offer, you can still book an appointment. All you need to do is:

1. Find your original invite (via text, email or letter) and follow the instructions in the link provided
2. If you can't find your invite, just give your GP surgery a call and ask if they can resend the invite.

I'm young and low-risk, so why do I need the vaccination?

The average age of people in intensive care is 60, but people much younger have been seriously ill and died too, with thousands more still suffering the effects of Long-COVID after what might have been a mild initial case.

Getting a vaccination will help protect you from the most severe symptoms of COVID-19 or spreading the virus to someone who may be more vulnerable than you. By taking up the offer of a vaccination, we'll be another step closer to getting life back to normal.

Can I choose which vaccine I have?

In most cases, no. Supply and availability of vaccines will be a key factor.

Any vaccines that the NHS 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 will offer a high degree of protection.

When it comes to the AstraZeneca vaccine, the JCVI advise that the benefits of vaccination far outweigh the risks. For adults aged over 40 years, this vaccine will continue to be used routinely based on availability.

Those under the age of 40, without underlying health conditions, who have not yet had their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, will be able to choose an alternative vaccine based on availability and an assessment of risk, should they wish to do so. These individuals may however make an informed choice to receive the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. The JCVI also advise that pregnant women should be offered the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines where available.

In Gloucestershire, people under 40 or who are pregnant will likely be offered Pfizer.

Are there any side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine?

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. Most of these are mild and short term, lasting no longer than a week, and not everyone gets them. These may include:

- A sore arm where the needle went in
- A headache
- Feeling achy
- Feeling or being sick
- Feeling tired

If required, paracetamol can help relieve some discomfort.

Is the NHS confident the vaccines are safe?

Yes. The NHS will not offer any COVID-19 vaccines to the public until experts have signed off that it is safe to do so. The MHRA, the official UK regulator, have said the vaccines in use are safe and highly effective, and we have full 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 is being used in the wider population.

There have been reports of an extremely rare adverse event of concurrent thrombosis (blood clots) and thrombocytopenia (low platelet count) following vaccination with the first dose of AstraZeneca.

The UK's Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has considered the relative balance of benefits and risks and advise that the benefits of prompt vaccination with the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine far outweigh the risk of adverse events, in particular for individuals 40 years of age and over and those who have underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of severe COVID-19 disease.

JCVI currently advises that it is preferable for adults aged under 40 years without underlying health conditions that put them at higher risk of severe COVID-19 disease, to be offered an alternative COVID-19 vaccine, if available.

Anyone who has received the first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine should still attend for their second vaccination, irrespective of age.

Can I have the vaccination if I am pregnant?

Yes. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) recently issued guidance which confirms that real-world data from the United States shows that around 90,000 pregnant women have been vaccinated, mainly with Pfizer and Moderna, without any safety concerns being raised.

Based on this data, the JCVI advises that it's preferable for pregnant women in the UK to be offered the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines where available. There is no evidence to suggest that other vaccines are unsafe for pregnant women, but more research is needed.

Does the COVID-19 vaccination affect fertility?

There is no evidence that the vaccine affects fertility, or your chances of becoming pregnant. If you are concerned, please search 'A guide to Covid-19 vaccination – All women of childbearing age, those currently pregnant or breastfeeding' on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) for more information.

Do I really need a second dose of the vaccine?

Yes, it's really important to come forward for the second vaccination when the time comes. You might be feeling unsure because you felt a bit poorly after your first vaccination. But just because you experienced side effects after the first jab, doesn't mean you'll feel the same after the second.

If you do have some side effects, most are short-term and mild, like a sore arm or feeling a bit tired and headachey for a day or so.

Please don't let it put you off having your second dose; the first dose of the vaccines offer a good level of protection against COVID-19, but for long-lasting and better protection against severe illness/symptoms, a second vaccination is needed.

You might be worried about having your second dose of Astra Zeneca because you've read the headlines about blood clots. This reaction to the vaccine is extremely rare and the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has considered the relative balance of benefits and risks and have advised that the benefits of AZ far outweigh the risk of having a reaction.