



Your guide to a second dose of COVID-19 vaccine

Are you 16 or 17?

The NHS is now offering 2 doses of COVID-19 vaccine to all young people aged 16 to 17 years to help give them longer lasting protection.

You may have recently had a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. This leaflet contains information that will help you make the decision about the right time for you to get the second dose.

Young people at greater risk

Those young people who are at greater risk of serious illness if they catch COVID-19 will already have been offered 2 doses of vaccine, given 8 weeks apart.

This leaflet is aimed at those young people who are not considered at greater risk.

How good is the protection from the first dose?

Studies suggest that even after 1 dose of vaccine your risk of serious complications from COVID-19 infection are greatly reduced. This protection is expected to last for a few months in young people.

People who have had previous COVID-19 infection who then get 1 dose of vaccine, and those who get infected after the first dose, make a good immune response – at least as good as people who have had 2 doses. This suggests that young people who get both infection and vaccine will have high levels of protection.

What are the benefits of a second dose?

A second dose helps to improve protection in the longer term. Further studies will help us to know how long protection will last.

Are there any side effects from the Pfizer vaccine?

Common side effects are:

- having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection. This tends to be worse around 1 to 2 days after the vaccination
- feeling tired
- headache
- general aches, or mild flu like symptoms

These side effects only last a few days but are more common after the second dose.

Less common side effects

Recently, cases of inflammation of the heart (called myocarditis or pericarditis) have been reported very rarely in the first week after the COVID-19 vaccines.

Most of these cases have been in younger men and are more common after the second vaccination.

The side effects include:

- chest pain
- shortness of breath
- feeling of having a fast beating, fluttering or pounding heart

Most people recovered and felt better following rest and simple treatments. Amongst those who get severe side effects, there may be an even smaller number in whom there are some longer-term effects. Longer term studies are underway.

If you had myocarditis or pericarditis after the first dose, you should seek medical advice before having a second dose of the vaccine.

When do I need the second dose?

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) currently advises that you should have your second dose around 12 weeks after your first dose. Having a 12 week gap may extend the length of time your protection will last after the second dose.

As a precaution, the JCVI believes that a gap of 8 to 12 weeks may reduce the risk of more serious but rare side effects, like myocarditis. The JCVI also suggests that if you have had a COVID-19 infection you should wait 12 weeks before having the next dose. If you have had the first dose of vaccine and been infected, you are likely to already have high levels of protection.

These gaps may be reduced to 8 weeks if we expect protection from the vaccine or from prior infection to be reduced, for example with a new variant.

There may be other reasons for having a second dose even sooner, after 8 weeks. These reasons include:

- if you are considered to be 'at risk' and have not yet had your second dose
- if you live with someone who is considered at risk and you want to help protect them
- if your circumstances, such as work or essential travel, require a second dose

If you are still unsure, you can discuss your decision with a doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

Further information

You should read the product information leaflet for more details on your vaccine, including possible side effects, on the Coronavirus Yellow Card website. You can also report suspected side effects of vaccines and medicines through the Yellow Card scheme.

You can do this online by searching Coronavirus Yellow Card or by downloading the Yellow Card app: coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/productinformation



Further information is available from: www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination