



Coronavirus
COVID-19
Public Health
Advice

Your COVID-19 vaccine

Important information
#ForUsAll

Large print version

www.hse.ie

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NCBI
Working for People
with Sight Loss



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Braille, audio and large print vaccine information leaflets

HSE information leaflets and aftercare leaflets for each COVID-19 vaccine are available in:

- Braille
- audio
- large print – PDF and Word document

You can request a posted copy of the most up-to-date versions.

Email library@ncbi.ie to request a copy.

Large print and audio versions of each COVID-19 vaccine leaflet are available on the HSE website.

Short link: <https://bit.ly/3x2PmMX>

Long link: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/covid-19-resources-and-translations/covid-19-vaccine-materials/covid19-vaccine-easy-read-and-accessible-information/>

You can also find them using a search engine. Use search terms like 'HSE audio vaccine leaflet'.

Other information sources

If you've got questions about your vaccine, there are answers you can trust at www.hse.ie

HSE website: www.hse.ie/covid19vaccine

HSELive phonenumber: **1800 700 700**

NCBI phonenumber: **1850 33 43 53**

Manufacturers' patient information leaflets: www.hse.ie/covid19vaccinePIL

Translated vaccine leaflets: www.hse.ie/covid19vaccinematierial

Breastfeeding and pregnancy: www.hse.ie/covidvacpreg

About this booklet

The HSE is rolling out COVID-19 vaccines across Ireland, bringing hope to our communities and offering us protection from COVID-19.

We're already seeing reduced illness and fewer deaths among groups who are vaccinated.

Getting your vaccine protects you, once you allow time for your vaccine to work. When groups of people are vaccinated, this can protect the people around you too.

This booklet tells you what you need to know about getting your COVID-19 vaccine.

Find out:

- how COVID-19 spreads and its symptoms
- about how your vaccine protects you
- how to register for your vaccine
- about developing and approving vaccines
- what to expect at a HSE vaccination centre
- how long your vaccine takes to work and what you can do after it

Over the coming weeks and months, everyone in Ireland who is eligible will be able to receive a free COVID-19 vaccine from the HSE.

This should offer us more options for safely returning to our health and social care services, to our education, spending time with loved ones, and reopening our society.

Because the more people who are protected from COVID-19, the better things will be for us all.

How COVID-19 spreads and its symptoms

COVID-19 is an illness that can affect your lungs and airways, and sometimes other parts of your body. It's caused by a virus called SARS-CoV-2, a type of coronavirus.

It's highly infectious. The most common way you can get COVID-19 is by coming into close contact with someone who has the virus. You can spread the virus even if you do not have symptoms.

It's mainly spread through close contact and droplets that come from your nose and mouth. For example, from someone who is talking loudly, singing, shouting, coughing or sneezing.

This happens when people are within 1 to 2 metres of each other. COVID-19 can also spread easily in crowded or poorly ventilated areas. You can get the virus from infected surfaces too.

Áine is a 27 year old from Co Kildare.

“Because I have a health condition, getting the vaccine meant the world to me after a stressful and sometimes scary year of living through a pandemic.

This past year has been tough.

I was lucky to be able to work from home. But I still spent the year worrying about myself, my family and my friends.

I have never felt so excited to visit my GP as I did when I went to receive my first dose.

It felt like a light at the end of a very long tunnel.”

Common symptoms

- a fever – high temperature of 38 degrees Celsius or above
- a new cough – this can be any kind of cough, not just dry
- shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

COVID-19 can cause anyone, at any age, serious illness, hospitalisation and even death.

Pregnant women, people with certain health conditions and older people have a higher risk of getting seriously ill if they get COVID-19.

If you have any symptoms of COVID-19:

- self-isolate – stay in your room
- get a COVID-19 test

Your GP can arrange a COVID-19 test for you. Your test and GP assessment are free of charge.

For factual, expert information you can trust on COVID-19, please visit www.hse.ie/coronavirus or call **HSELive** on **1800 700 700**.

How COVID-19 vaccines protect you

COVID-19 vaccines offer you protection from COVID-19.

Vaccines teach your immune system how to protect you from diseases. All vaccines do this, but different types of vaccine work in different ways.

The surface of the virus that causes COVID-19 is studded with spikes. These spikes allow the virus to attach to the cells of your body. They're important in how the vaccines can help protect you.

When you get your vaccine, it triggers an immune response that tells your body to make antibodies. While your vaccine doesn't stay in your body for very long, the antibodies stay and stop virus spikes from attaching to your cells.

After your body has time to produce these antibodies, you're less likely to get sick with COVID-19. You're much less likely to get seriously ill or need to go to hospital.

It's much safer to get immunity through your vaccination, than by getting COVID-19.

While it's up to you to decide to get the vaccine, the HSE, the World Health Organization and the Department of Health strongly recommend that you do so, as soon as it's offered to you.

Number of doses

For most COVID-19 vaccines, people need 2 doses, at separate times, to get longer lasting protection. There are also vaccines that are given in 1 dose.

If you had COVID-19 in the last 6 months, you only need 1 dose of a vaccine.

Breastfeeding and pregnancy

You can get the COVID-19 vaccine if you're breastfeeding.

If you're pregnant, talk to your obstetrician or GP about getting your COVID-19 vaccine.

More information is available at: www.hse.ie/covidvacpreg

If you already had COVID-19

Your vaccine reduces your risk of getting COVID-19 again. It can reduce the seriousness of your symptoms if you do.

Your vaccine cannot give you COVID-19

If you get COVID-19 soon after your vaccination, it's possible you caught it before your appointment.

Registering when it's your turn

1. Look out for when you can register

The HSE will let you know when it's your turn to register through **www.hse.ie**, news or public advertising.

Most people need to register online at **www.hse.ie** to get their free COVID-19 vaccine at a HSE vaccination centre.

Please do not register until it's your turn.

Some people are vaccinated elsewhere, like at their GP or local pharmacy. Find information on eligible age groups and participating pharmacies at **www.hse.ie**

2. Check what you need to register online

To register online, you need:

- a mobile phone number
- an email address
- your Personal Public Service PPS number
- your Eircode

Text message is the main way the HSE communicates with you about your vaccination.

If you do not have all of these, you can still register. Call the COVID-19 helpline on **1800 700 700** to register by phone instead.

You can use a smartphone, tablet or computer to register online.

If you do not have one of these, call the helpline to register.

3. Register online

When it's your turn, visit **vaccine.hse.ie** to register.

- a.** Click 'Start now' and choose your group – at busy times, there may be a queue.
- b.** Create your account – you will receive a verification email.
- c.** Click on the link in the verification email – you then get a verification text SMS.
- d.** Enter the verification code from the text and create a password.
- e.** Enter your personal details – read why the HSE asks for this information at **www.hse.ie**
- f.** Check your details and click 'Finish' to complete your registration.

For help with registering yourself or someone else online, visit:
www.hse.ie

4. Wait for your appointment text

You do not get your appointment immediately. It could be a few weeks after you register.

You will get a text three to 7 days before your appointment.

This tells you the date, time, HSE vaccination centre to go to and which vaccine you're getting.

If you need to, you can request a new appointment by following the instructions in your appointment text.

The HSE may send you text messages with any other updates you need to know.

Development and approval of vaccines

The HSE only uses COVID-19 vaccines that the European Medicines Agency EMA has approved.

While COVID-19 vaccine development moved fast, the vaccines have gone through the same steps as all licensed medicines.

This included:

- pharmaceutical quality checks
- non-clinical trials
- three phases of clinical trials with tens of thousands of people

The EMA then scientifically evaluated and authorised the COVID-19 vaccines for use in Europe. More information on how COVID-19 vaccines are approved is available at www.ema.europa.eu

Speed of development

There are a few reasons why vaccines were developed quickly.

- There was huge global investment into researching and developing the vaccines.
- A lot of people had COVID-19 when they were developed, so scientists could learn quickly that they're effective.
- Manufacturers started to make the vaccines, so they were ready to go if approved.

Effectiveness

Worldwide, vaccines save at least two to three million lives each year, and protect many more from lifelong illnesses. Millions of people have received COVID-19 vaccines all over the world.

There's strong, reliable evidence that COVID-19 vaccines greatly reduce your risk of getting COVID-19. They're highly effective at preventing deaths and serious illness from COVID-19.

In Ireland alone, we're already seeing reduced illness and fewer deaths among people who are vaccinated.

Monitoring

In Ireland, the Health Products Regulatory Authority HPRA regulates medicines. It monitors the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines after they're approved for use.

You can find out more at: www.hpra.ie

Side effects

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. Most of these are mild to moderate, short-term, and not everyone gets them.

When you're getting vaccinated, the HSE gives you a detailed leaflet with information about possible side effects of your vaccine.

The vaccines are new and information about long-term side effects is limited.

As with all vaccines, you can report suspected side effects to the Health Products Regulatory Authority HPRA at: www.hpra.ie/report

As more people get vaccinated, more information becomes available. The HSE regularly updates both www.hse.ie and its vaccine information leaflets.

Before your vaccination appointment

Your appointment text message will tell you which vaccine you will receive. You can read or listen to the information leaflet and aftercare leaflet for the vaccine you will be receiving.

Large print

The large print leaflets are available on the HSE website. They are available in Word documents and PDFs. Short link:

<https://bit.ly/3x2PmMX>

You can request a large print copy of the vaccine information leaflet and aftercare leaflet. Email **library@ncbi.ie**. They will post the large print leaflets to you.

Braille

You can request a Braille copy of the vaccine information leaflet and aftercare leaflet. Email **library@ncbi.ie**. They will post the Braille leaflets to you.

Audio

The audio leaflets are available on the HSE website. Short link:

<https://bit.ly/3x2PmMX>

You can request an audio copy of the vaccine information leaflet and aftercare leaflet. Email **library@ncbi.ie**. They will post the audio recordings to you.

At the HSE vaccination centre

1. Arrive at the HSE vaccination centre

Appointments take about 30 minutes and are well-spaced out at these large venues.

Your appointment is at your nearest available HSE vaccination centre. When you arrive, follow the signs or instructions from the stewards.

Information about parking and site facilities is available at:

www.hse.ie/covidvaccinationcentres

2. Check-in at reception

The receptionist takes your details and confirms your ID. If you registered without a PPS number, you need proof of address.

You get a HSE vaccine information leaflet and the manufacturer's leaflet.

Remember, vaccination is by appointment only.

Check what ID and proof of address you need at: **www.hse.ie**

3. Move to a vaccination booth

A trained vaccinator can answer any questions you have. They check that you're okay to get your vaccine and confirm your consent to be vaccinated.

The vaccinator gives you the COVID-19 vaccine as an injection in your upper arm. It only takes a few minutes.

You then receive an aftercare advice leaflet.

They also give you a vaccine record card with the name and batch number of your vaccine.

4. Go to the observation area before you leave

Stay here for at least 15 minutes. There's someone here to make sure you're feeling well.

Unless you're asked to stay longer, you can then leave the HSE vaccination centre. After your vaccine, it's okay to drive as long as you're feeling okay.

Second dose

If you need a second dose, you get a text message with another appointment. The time between your appointments can vary.

Thank you for protecting yourself and others.

My vaccination day checklist

- If I have COVID-19 symptoms, self-isolate, phone my GP and request a new appointment.
- Bring appointment information, face covering, ID and, if needed, proof of address.
- Go alone, if possible, and arrive on time.
- If you have mobility issues or need help, you can bring a family member or friend into the vaccination centre with you. You should both wear face coverings.
- Ask a family member or friend to help me get there, if needed.
- Wear a short-sleeved t-shirt or sleeves I can roll up.

When you're vaccine protected

Getting your COVID-19 vaccine reduces your risk of getting COVID-19 and protects you from serious complications of the illness.

In the future, you'll also have access to a digital vaccination certificate that proves you have received your vaccine in Ireland, should you need it.

When you have allowed time for your vaccine to work, some activities with other people are much safer than before you had vaccine protection.

This is sometimes known as your vaccine bonus or vaccine dividend.

Meeting others after your vaccine

Once your vaccine has had time to work, you're considered vaccine protected.

You can meet indoors with:

- vaccine protected people from up to 2 other households
- people who are not vaccinated from 1 other household – as long as no one from that household is at high risk from COVID-19

You can do this without wearing face coverings or staying 2 metres apart.

Residents of long-term care facilities

If at least eight out of 10 residents are vaccine protected, you can have:

- up to 4 visits per week with up to 2 people per visit

If you and your visitor are both vaccine protected, you do not need to wear face coverings or stay 2 metres apart when you're alone together in a room or car.

Close contacts

If you're a vaccine protected close contact of a person who tests positive for COVID-19, you do not need to:

- restrict your movements – stay at home – for 14 days
- be tested for COVID-19

If you're immunocompromised, the contact tracing team will advise you what you need to do.

Your vaccine takes time to work

After your vaccine, wait until it has time to work before following the vaccine bonus advice.

Pfizer BioNTech 7 days after 2nd dose

Moderna 14 days after 2nd dose

Astra Zeneca 28 days after 1st dose – you still need to get your 2nd dose

Janssen 14 days after single dose

If you had COVID-19 in the last 6 months, confirmed with a laboratory test, you can also follow the vaccine bonus advice – unless you're aged 65 or older or you're immunocompromised.

It's understandable that you may be nervous, even if you're vaccine protected. You can be confident that your vaccine should work, no matter which one you receive.

Keep protecting yourself and others after your vaccine

As you begin to socialise more and meet up with people who you have not seen for a long time, you should still be careful. Remember, lots of people have not yet been vaccinated.

This means that you still need to keep 2 metres from others, wear a face covering and wash your hands regularly.

You should also avoid crowds, poorly ventilated spaces and meeting people who are restricting their movements or self-isolating.

This helps to protect you and everyone else, even when you're vaccine protected.

As more and more people are vaccinated, pay attention to the public health advice that's relevant to you. Find factual, expert advice you can trust at: **www.hse.ie**

Keep well

This is still a hard time for us all, and there are things that you can do to help yourself feel healthy and well.

Keep active and go outdoors now that summer is here, and stay in touch or make new plans to connect with a friend or family member. Enjoy healthy foods, and try to get enough sleep. Mind your mood, doing small, simple things every day that feel good.

If you need more support, the HSE's **www.yourmentalhealth.ie** is a good place to start. There are lots more tips and ideas on keeping well at: **www.gov.ie/healthyireland**

Dr Nuala O'Connor is a GP at Elmwood Medical Practice in Douglas, Co Cork.

“ It's hard to describe how uplifting the days we're vaccinating are, both for those coming in and for all of our team.

Many of our older patients, and those with chronic medical conditions, have had to give up so much.

Many have had no face-to-face contact with friends or family, or have not even felt safe going to the local shop for milk. We're so proud to help them get back to enjoying their life to the full.

Now that almost all of our over 70s are vaccine protected, it's lovely to hear them making plans – catching up with their friends, getting their hair done or simply hugging their grandchildren.

Most people are aware of the dangers posed by COVID-19 and the overwhelming scientific evidence in favour of vaccination.

There have been some questions about side effects. But in the end, having listened to all of the evidence, most decided to proceed. At the end of the day, it's a personal choice.

Your GP or another health professional caring for you can answer any questions you have, so that you're ready when it's offered to you.”

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