

Scottish Vaccination and Immunisation Programme

Spring COVID-19 Programme 2025 – Lines to take

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1. Background information

- Decision-making on Scotland's vaccination programme is guided by the independent, expert advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).
- On 13 November 2024, the JCVI published its advice on the COVID-19 vaccination programmes for 2025 and spring 2026. [View the JCVI advice on COVID-19 spring vaccination programmes for 2025 and spring 2026](#)
- In Scotland, the spring programme will run from 31 March to 30 June 2025.
- The primary aim of the COVID-19 vaccination programme has always been the prevention of severe COVID-19 disease, hospitalisation and death in those most at risk and for 2025 this remains unchanged. However, the programme has begun to transition from a pandemic response to that of routine immunisation.

2. Key messages

- COVID-19 hasn't disappeared. Last summer, there were over 10,000 reported cases of COVID-19 in Scotland and more than 4,000 people hospitalised. 42% of those were aged 75 years and over.
- Your age and/or health condition makes you more vulnerable and protection from the COVID-19 vaccine reduces over time. That's why it's important you get an additional dose of the vaccine at regular intervals to maintain your protection all year round.
- Not everyone is eligible for the vaccine this spring - but you are. You're being invited for an additional dose based on scientific evidence because of your age and/or health condition. It's important you get all the doses you're offered to help maintain your protection all year round.
- Even if your health condition is well managed, you're still at increased risk from severe illness from COVID-19. That's why it's important to get the COVID-19 vaccine when offered to maintain your protection.

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3. Supporting lines

- Getting vaccinated is the safest and most effective way to protect yourself against COVID-19 circulating this spring.
- Even if you had a COVID-19 vaccine in the winter, it's important to get another dose this spring to help maintain your protection all year round.
- Optimum protection from the COVID-19 vaccines is derived during the first 3 months after vaccination. Protection from the vaccines does not stop after 3 months, but slowly it does start to fade.
- Information regarding the programme can be found at nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine

4. Eligibility

The main aim of the COVID-19 programme is the prevention of severe illness, hospitalisations and deaths from COVID-19. Those most at risk are in older age groups, those in care homes and those with particular clinical conditions that make them more vulnerable to COVID-19-related illness.

In spring 2025, the JCVI advises that a COVID-19 vaccine should be offered to:

- All those aged 75 years and over
- Residents in care homes for older adults
- Individuals aged 6 months and over who have a weakened immune system.

To be eligible, an individual must turn 75 years of age on or before 30 June 2025 (people born on or before 30 June 1950). Infants must turn 6 months of age on or before 31 March 2025 to be eligible.

A list of eligible health conditions is available on NHS Inform:

www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccineconditions

If an individual knows that they are eligible for vaccination this spring, either because they have a weakened immune system or are aged 75 years and older (up to and including 30 June 2025), but they have not been sent an appointment or prompt

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invitation, they can book via the [online portal](#) or by calling the national vaccination helpline on 0800 030 8013.

5. Carers seeking vaccination

- Carers and household contacts of those who are immunosuppressed are not eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine this spring.
- This has been the case for the past three spring programmes, in 2022, 2023 and 2024.
- The spring COVID-19 programme is focused on building immunity in those most at risk, which are older age groups, older adults in care homes and those with particular clinical conditions that make them more vulnerable to COVID-19-related illnesses.
- We know that carers may wish to seek COVID-19 vaccination to protect those they care for, but the key thing is to make sure that the person you care for receives their spring vaccine, if they are eligible. This will give the person you care for optimum protection against the COVID-19 virus.

6. Changes to COVID-19 eligibility from spring 2025

- Decision-making on Scotland's vaccination programmes is guided by the independent, expert advice of the JCVI. This is based on robust evidence of which groups are at risk of severe disease, hospitalisation and death from COVID-19. Given that population immunity is changing post-pandemic, the JCVI recommends an increased focus on protecting the oldest adults in our population, as well as those who are immunosuppressed.
- Over the last four years, population immunity to SARS-CoV-2 has been increasing due to a combination of naturally acquired immunity following recovery from infection and vaccine-derived immunity (this combination is known as 'hybrid immunity'). COVID-19 is now a relatively mild disease for most people. It can still be unpleasant, but rates of hospitalisation and death from COVID-19 have reduced significantly since SARS-CoV-2 first emerged. Age has always been strongly associated with the

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risk of hospitalisation and mortality from COVID-19, with the oldest in the population being the most vulnerable.

- As COVID-19 becomes an endemic disease, and with a move towards longer term plans, the focus of the programme is shifting towards targeted vaccination of the oldest adults and individuals who are immunosuppressed. These are the two groups who continue to be at higher risk of serious disease, including mortality. This was outlined in the [JCVI statement on COVID-19 vaccination in 2025 and spring 2026 - GOV.UK](#)

7. Appointments and booking

People aged 12 and over with a weakened immune system, adults aged 75 or over and older adults in care homes

- Look out for your COVID-19 vaccine invitation arriving by post (white NHS branded envelope), email or text - depending on your communication preference.
- Check if you're eligible by visiting nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine
- To book or reschedule your appointment, visit nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine

Children aged 6 months - 11 years

- Look out for your child's COVID-19 vaccine invitation arriving by post, email or text.
- Check if your child is eligible by visiting nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine
- To reschedule your child's appointment, call the Vaccination Helpline on 0800 030 8013.
- Vaccination will usually be offered around 6 months (and no less than 3 months) after your last dose.

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If it's more convenient, you can book an appointment at a clinic in another health board, for example somewhere close to where you work or visit regularly.

8. Vaccines available this spring

The following vaccines will be deployed for the spring programme:

- Moderna mRNA (Spikevax) XBB.1.5 vaccine, which will be stocked by the vast majority of clinics in Scotland for those aged 18 and above.
- Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA (Comirnaty) XBB.1.5 vaccine which will be used exclusively for those aged 6 months to 17 years. In some more rural and remote clinics, Pfizer will also be used for those aged 18 and above.
- The COVID-19 vaccines available this spring provide good protection against severe COVID-19 disease.

9. Non-mRNA vaccines are not available for the spring

- There are very few people who cannot have the mRNA vaccines being offered this spring. Non-mRNA vaccines have been available in previous COVID-19 programmes for those who cannot receive mRNA vaccines due to severe allergic reactions.
- During the winter programme in 2024/25, the Novavax Nuvaxovid XBB.1.5 vaccine was used. At this time, this was the only product available in the UK market.
- Supply of Novavax Nuvaxovid XBB.1.5 is no longer available within the UK market and this means that the NHS in Scotland is currently unable to procure non-mRNA stock for the spring programme
- This, unfortunately, means that there is no non-mRNA alternative for those who cannot receive mRNA vaccines due to severe allergic reactions.
- The lack of non-mRNA stock applies, not only to the NHS in Scotland, but to the rest of the NHS and to private pharmacies across the UK. The decision not to make stock available at this time sits with the manufacturer.

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- It is the responsibility of each NHS board to communicate with those people, in its area, who cannot have the m-RNA vaccine due to severe allergic reactions.
- Nuvaxovid JN.1 vaccine has not yet been approved for use in the UK. NHS Scotland will only use vaccines that have been approved for use by the MHRA (Medical Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency) and meet the required standards of safety and efficacy. The MHRA must assess all the data and be satisfied that all the necessary trials and checks have been completed before a vaccine can be used.

10. Side effects

Like all medicines, the COVID-19 vaccine can cause side effects. This is normal but not everyone gets them. Side effects show that the vaccine is teaching your body's immune system how to protect itself from the disease. Side effects are usually mild and may include:

- a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection
- feeling tired
- headache
- general aches or mild flu-like symptoms

Side effects should normally only last a few days, and no longer than a week. Even if you've had side effects after a previous dose, it's recommended you get all the doses you're eligible for, unless your side effect was severe. If you have any questions, speak to your health professional or vaccinator.

You can rest and take paracetamol (follow the dose advice in the packaging) to help you feel better. Remember to never give medicines that contain aspirin to children under 16 years of age.

More information and advice on side effects, and how to report them can be found in [the COVID-19 spring vaccine leaflet](#)

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11. Private COVID-19 vaccination

- Private sales of COVID-19 vaccines are not controlled or managed by NHS Scotland.
- NHS Scotland does not have any responsibility over which pharmacies offer private COVID-19 vaccines, which vaccine types they stock or what they charge.
- Private sales are managed by arrangements between pharmacy companies and vaccine manufacturers.
- NHS Scotland continues to offer the COVID-19 vaccine to those eligible this spring, free of charge, as recommended by the JCVI.

12. Opting out of a COVID-19 vaccine

- If you wish to opt out of all future COVID-19 vaccine appointments, please call 0800 030 8013. Please note that if you choose to opt out, we will no longer send you out a **dated/timed appointment** for these vaccinations, but we may still send you a letter, text or email informing you of your eligibility for any future programme, offering you the chance to book, should you wish to do so. This is because NHS Scotland has a duty of care to inform you of the vaccines available to you. If you are eligible for any other vaccine programmes, you will still be invited for those.
- If you previously opted out of a COVID-19 vaccine, this means that we no longer send you **dated/timed appointments** for these vaccinations. You may however still receive a letter, text or email informing you of your eligibility for future programmes, and offering you the chance to book, should you wish to do so. This is because NHS Scotland has a duty of care to inform you of the vaccines available to you.