

COVID Advice and Lockdown Easing

The COVID Vaccination Programme¹

Why vaccinations?

Vaccines help people survive. Vaccines save 5 lives every minute. The eradication of smallpox—a serious disease that left even survivors scarred for life—alone saves an estimated 5 million lives every year. If a vaccine had not eradicated smallpox, someone would now die from the disease every 6 seconds of every day. Prior to the introduction of a vaccine, as recently as 1980, measles caused more than 2.6 million deaths globally.

Vaccines can only save lives if people are vaccinated. Fortunately, most people get vaccinated. For example, 85% of children worldwide are vaccinated against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (whooping cough), and in 125 countries that figure exceeds 90%. The vast majority of people in most countries vaccinate their children, thereby making an important contribution to public health and people's lives.

Why COVID-19 vaccinations?

COVID-19 is a serious disease. In only 10 months the SARS-CoV-2 virus infected over 78 million people across the world, killing 1.7 million. COVID-19 patients require intensive care in hospital at a rate more than 6 times greater than during the influenza pandemic in 2009. Many survivors are faced with sometimes severe long-term health impacts.

While behavioural measures such as isolating while symptomatic, mask-wearing, and physical distancing have slowed the spread of the virus, vaccines provide a better path out of the COVID-19 pandemic, and scientists have now developed several highly effective vaccines against COVID-19.

The public response so far

Studies in several countries have shown that most of the public recognize the importance of the COVID-19 vaccine and are keen to be vaccinated. For example, in a U.K. sample of more than 5,000 respondents, 72% were willing to be vaccinated in October 2020. In Finland, up to 75% of respondents were willing to be vaccinated. In Australia, the rate was 86% and similarly high levels have been

¹ The contents of this booklet, including all facts and figures, are sourced from 'The Covid-19 Vaccine Communication Handbook', which was produced by a team of scientific experts from all over the world. This unique online guide was published in January 2021 by the University of Bristol. As of May 2021, it can be accessed here: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/news/2021/january/covid-19-vaccine-communication-handbook.html>

found in Malaysia. In the United States the rate was 66% in a national sample of 19,058 respondents in August 2020.

Facts Surrounding COVID-19 and the Vaccination Programme

- There is negligible risk of any vaccine giving you the disease—and in the case of COVID-19, none of the vaccines currently being rolled out use the live virus at all, not even in a weakened form.
- Even though COVID-19 vaccine development was accelerated, vaccine testing was still required to proceed through a rigorous series of steps to establish the vaccines' safety and efficacy. The vaccines' safety will continue to be closely monitored as they are rolled out, to ensure they don't have serious side effects at unacceptable rates.
- mRNA vaccines are synthetic and do not contain a weakened form of the actual virus. Instead, mRNA vaccines deliver instructions that allow your body to make a protective response. This is just as unlikely to change your genome as eating fish will make you grow gills.
- Because of the risk from COVID-19 and its prevalence, the trials have proceeded faster than has been possible with other vaccines. Many tens of thousands of people signed up rapidly to participate in vaccine trials, compared to the more usual year or 18 months it takes to recruit a fraction of that for other vaccines.
- The COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective but transient side effects such as headaches, pain at the injection site, or fatigue have been reported by a significant number of people.
- COVID-19 is a highly infectious and deadly disease. By the end of 2020, it had caused over 1.7 million deaths globally.
- Our understanding of COVID-19 is based on scientific research conducted by teams all over the world, as well as practical experience by the entire global medical community.
- It is true that COVID-19 is more deadly in older people and those with underlying health problems. However, COVID-19 has caused many additional deaths beyond what would normally be expected in an average year.

Getting More Help and Advice

If you have any questions surrounding the vaccine, but aren't sure where to turn, please contact the Oxfordshire Mind Information Service on 01865 247788, or info@oxfordshiremind.org.uk. You can text us on 07451 277973. You might also consider taking a look at some of the resources below.

Useful Links:

- Question and answer sheet
- Information around online information and the vaccine
- Reassurances on the vaccine
- NHS Myth busting video around the vaccine
- Lockdown Easements
- Looking after your mental health as we come out of lockdown

Next steps:

- Information on the Governments Covid 19 Vaccine Programme
- Booking a vaccination [check client group being vaccinated currently here]