

## COVID-19 vaccine information for patients





Millions of people in the UK have received the COVID-19 vaccine. The COVID-19 vaccines are suitable for adults with kidney disease.

*People with serious kidney disease have developed severe illness from COVID-19 and the vaccine will offer protection for you and your community.*

The good news is that you will be invited to have your vaccination soon.

Please consider having one for your own safety.

Reduce risk by:

|   |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
| <br>Washing your hands | <br>Wearing a face mask | <br>Maintaining appropriate social distancing, being outside and avoiding crowded places | <br>Getting tested if you have symptoms |
|---|--|--|--|

## Here are some common questions which people have asked, with answers from kidney specialists.

### **How did the vaccines get approved so quickly and how do we know they are safe?**

The safety and effectiveness of the approved vaccines were scrutinised by an independent body which followed all stages of a well-established process. It was necessary to produce a vaccine quickly due to the seriousness of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was possible to do this quickly because so many people worked together to prioritise the production of this vaccine.

### **I have heard my nurse say that she is waiting for the AstraZeneca vaccine. Does it make any difference which one I have?**

Adult kidney patients can have any of the available vaccines. They are licenced for use in adults only. There is no evidence that one is better or safer than another. We recommend you take the vaccine you are offered, when you are offered it.

### **Do we know enough about the vaccine to know that it is safe in kidney patients?**

The kidney experts at the Renal Association and British Renal Society, who represent kidney doctors and nurses, have reviewed the evidence and agree that the vaccines are safe for people with kidney disease, on dialysis and with kidney transplants. Advice to individuals may vary because people with kidney disease often have other conditions too, so what is right for one person, may not be right for someone else. Your kidney doctors will advise you on what is best for you so speak to them for more advice.

### **The vaccines are new, should I worry about that?**

When deciding whether to have the vaccine it is also important to consider your risk of having a more severe disease with COVID-19 and many people with kidney disease will have a high risk of severe disease. The companies that make the vaccines are monitoring all these people to look for any safety concerns. There have not been safety concerns after giving them to millions of

people in many different countries. Therefore experts in kidney disease recommend having the vaccine to help reduce your risk of getting COVID-19.

### **The vaccine has not been tested on kidney patients, is that something that I should be worried about?**

None of the trials specifically only included people with serious kidney disease, but they have included a wider population from all diverse backgrounds that included healthy and individuals with pre-existing conditions. The risks kidney patients face from catching COVID-19 far outweigh the risks of potential side effects from the vaccine. Studies are planned to assess the response of kidney patients to vaccination and to identify whether revaccination is required (as with flu vaccination, which is once a year).

### **Is it worth having a vaccine if it's not 100% effective?**

No vaccine is ever 100% effective, for example the flu vaccine. For people with kidney disease, COVID-19 can be very serious and therefore the benefit from the protection that the vaccine will give you would outweigh the potential risks. There will always be people who react differently but protection from the virus is really important and the vaccines offer that protection for yourself and others around you. It may be that people with kidney disease and people taking immunosuppressants do not respond quite as well. However, it is expected that the vaccines will work well enough make it worthwhile having the vaccine, especially when the high risk to kidney patients from COVID-19 is considered.

### **I am worried about the safety of the vaccines**

All of the vaccines administered in the UK have passed stringent safety tests. They would not have been approved for use if they did not pass these tests. The manufacturers monitor for long term effects and as yet there have not been any longer term effects. The vaccines have been approved by specialists in drug safety not only in the UK but across the world. These specialists, also known as regulators, look at all the data from the companies that make the vaccines but are independent of them and make a decision about whether they can be safely given. They also monitor for any longer term effects of the

vaccine after they have been approved. Our independent UK regulator is called the Medicines Health Research Agency or MHRA.

### **Are the vaccines live?**

The Pfizer, Oxford/AstraZeneca and Moderna vaccines are not live vaccines. This means they don't contain active, or 'live' virus. Instead they deliver only the important spike protein from the COVID-19 virus which allows the body to prepare the immune system so that it can recognise and fight the actual virus if it is encountered in the future.

### **Are the COVID-19 vaccines unsuitable for people with transplants?**

All of the vaccines being rolled out are suitable for people with kidney disease (whether you have had a transplant, are on dialysis or have another kidney condition). Live vaccines are not safe for people with kidney transplants but the COVID-19 vaccines are not live vaccines. Transplant experts have considered this question and are happy that they are safe for people with transplants.

### **I am taking immunosuppressants, so which is the best vaccine for me?**

#### **Would it be worth waiting for a different type of vaccine?**

Based on all the information we have reviewed, immunosuppressed patients can receive any of the vaccines offered to them; there is currently no evidence that any vaccine is better than the other for this group of patients. Although they may not give as much protection as they might do in someone who has a fully functioning immune system, they are still likely to give a degree of protection so are helpful.

### **I'm worried that I should not have the vaccine because of side effects of the vaccine**

It is normal to have certain reactions after a vaccination. There may be redness, swelling or pain around the injection site. Tiredness, fever, headache and aching limbs are also not uncommon in the first three days after vaccination. These normal vaccine reactions are usually mild and get better after a few days. Your kidney doctors or GP will advise you, but you should not

avoid having a vaccine because of potential side effects. The risks of catching COVID-19 far outweigh any potential risk from the vaccines.

### Can I have a baby if I have had the vaccine?

Women who are trying to become pregnant do not need to avoid pregnancy after vaccination and a pregnancy test is not needed before vaccination.


Getting pregnant at this point is a matter of personal choice. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists has excellent advice on this.

If you are pregnant or thinking of getting pregnant it is worth looking at it: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/guidelines/coronavirus-pregnancy/>

However, vaccination if you are pregnant should be considered if you are at very high risk of complications from COVID-19 because you have serious kidney disease. Please talk to your kidney team about whether you might benefit from the vaccine if you are pregnant. Breastfeeding women can be offered the vaccine. There is no evidence that the vaccine is harmful to future pregnancies.

**Please remember that even if you receive the vaccine, for now you should still follow social distancing guidance, wash your hands regularly and wear a face mask. This is because it will take a few weeks before your immunity builds up and also because the infection level is so high at the moment.**

Reduce risk by:



The infographic is enclosed in a red border and contains four icons with corresponding text below them. From left to right: 1. An icon of hands being washed under a faucet, with the text 'Washing your hands' below it. 2. An icon of a person's head wearing a face mask, with the text 'Wearing a face mask' below it. 3. An icon of two people standing apart with a double-headed arrow between them, and a tree to the right, with the text 'Maintaining appropriate social distancing, being outside and avoiding crowded places' below it. 4. An icon of a person coughing into their elbow, a thermometer, and a person wearing a mask, with the text 'Getting tested if you have symptoms' below it.

For more information on COVID-19 and vaccination, please see [www.kidneycareuk.org/coronavirus](http://www.kidneycareuk.org/coronavirus)

# Why should I have the COVID-19 vaccine?

## COVID-19 vaccines save lives

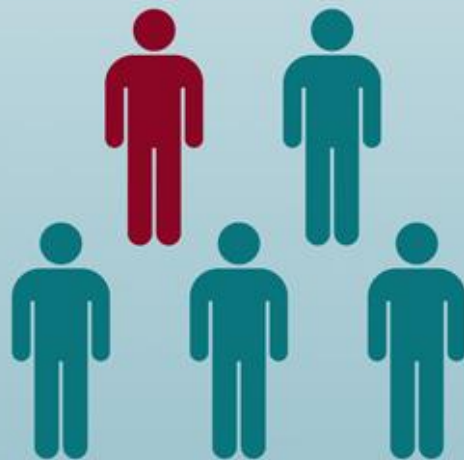


**Look out for your vaccine invitation soon**

You are at increased risk:

**1 in 5**

people with chronic kidney disease (stage 4+) who contracted COVID-19 have died



**GET PROTECTED:**

**It's much safer for you to have the vaccine than to have COVID-19**

Scan for more information



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