

## Patient information factsheet

# Your COVID-19 vaccination appointment

## Cancer care patients

You have been referred to the University Hospital Southampton (UHS) COVID-19 vaccination hub. This factsheet explains what will happen next and aims to answer some of the initial questions you may have.

### Why have I been referred to the UHS vaccination hub?

The NHS is currently offering the COVID-19 vaccine to certain groups of people, including those aged 70 and over and people with certain health conditions, including cancer. We believe that you will benefit from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. Your clinical team may have already discussed this with you and given you specific advice.

### What happens next?

We will contact you by telephone to offer you an appointment to receive your first dose of the vaccine at the UHS vaccination hub. We are offering designated slots for cancer care patients to receive the vaccine safely, where we will ensure minimal crowding and adequate social distancing.

**If you do not hear from us with 5 working days, please contact the cancer care COVID-19 vaccination enquiry desk on: 023 8120 5518.**

### Does it matter when I have my vaccine?

- It is important to receive the vaccine in a timely way, in most cases, as soon as possible (unless directed otherwise by your hospital team).
- If your clinical team has given you specific guidance on when to receive the vaccine, you must inform the vaccine hub appointment scheduler when booking your slot.
- If you have not been given any specific advice on the timing of your vaccine, then choose a slot that is convenient to you. You may wish to coincide with another hospital appointment, such as a blood test or a COVID-19 swab, and this is fine.
- We recommend you avoid booking your vaccination on the same day as having cancer treatment in CHOC (Combined Haematology and Oncology Centre) or in C7, to avoid a timings clash or running late which may be stressful for you on the day.

We'll try to be flexible but it may not always be possible to fit you in at your preferred time.

### Additional requirements

If you have any additional requirements, such as wheelchair access, an accompanying carer or a translator, remember to tell us when booking your slot.

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## Please postpone your appointment if you:

- feel unwell
- have any possible symptoms of COVID-19 (high temperature, new continuous cough or loss or change to your sense of taste or smell)
- are instructed to self-isolate by the NHS Track and Trace app/an NHS COVID-19 contact tracer.

## How to postpone or reschedule

You can change your vaccination appointment by telephone: **023 8120 2393** (9am to 4pm, seven days a week).

## On the day of your appointment

Please wear a face covering and dress in warm clothing, as the windows will be open for fresh air ventilation. Be prepared to expose your upper arm easily for the injection.

## Where to go

**The UHS vaccination hub is in the South Academic Block, B-level, Southampton General Hospital.**

The easiest route without stairs is to enter the hospital via the main entrance and follow the signs to South Academic Block.

## When you arrive

- Tell us that you are a cancer care patient straight away. Show your appointment letter or text message, if you have received one (please don't worry if you haven't).
- You will be given some information to read, followed by a short consultation with a vaccine clinician to check that it is safe to proceed.
- Afterwards, you'll need to rest in a waiting room and be observed for at least 15 minutes before you can leave. You may bring a drink with you.
- Toilets and disabled-toilet facilities are available in the vaccination hub.

The whole process will take about 45 minutes from start to finish.

If you are scheduled to have a blood test or COVID-19 swab in CHOC or C7 on the same day and find you are running late, please call: **023 8120 6494** for blood tests or swab appointments; or **023 8120 8497** for treatment appointments. Inform the vaccination team and please do not worry.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Must I have the COVID-19 vaccine?

Vaccination is voluntary. It is recommended that all patients receiving cancer treatment are considered for COVID-19 vaccination. Many cancer patients receiving treatment will fall into the 'clinically extremely vulnerable' category and therefore the overall consensus among doctors is that the benefits of the vaccine outweigh the risks. The only specific reason to avoid vaccination is if you have hypersensitivity or anaphylaxis to the vaccine or any of its ingredients.

### Who should avoid the vaccine?

The approved COVID-19 vaccines do not contain any animal products or egg. Tell healthcare staff before you are vaccinated if you've ever had a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis).

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## **You should not have the vaccine if you've ever had a serious allergic reaction to:**

- a previous dose of the same COVID-19 vaccine
- any component (excipient) of the COVID-19 vaccine
- medicines, household products or cosmetics containing polyethylene glycol (PEG).

Serious allergic reactions are rare. If you do have a reaction to the vaccine, it usually happens in minutes. Staff giving the vaccine are trained to deal with allergic reactions and treat them immediately.

## **Which vaccine am I getting?**

Three vaccines are approved for use in the UK but only two are available currently. Both the Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford University/AstraZeneca vaccines are safe and effective. Do ask the vaccination team which vaccine they are using on the day of the vaccination. It is likely that you will be receiving the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine product.

## **Will I catch COVID-19 from the vaccine?**

No, you will not. None of the currently licensed vaccines in the UK are live vaccines.

## **Is there a best time period or a worst time period to get vaccinated?**

In most cases, it is more important to just get vaccinated in a timely way so you are protected as soon as possible. It takes about 2 weeks after the first vaccine dose for immunity to start building up. Two doses of the vaccine are needed for maximal and longer lasting protection.

There might be rare or specific instances in some cancer types or treatment types where timing matters - your consultant would have informed you and the vaccination team about this during your recent clinic consultation.

- If you are only on hormonal therapy tablets for breast cancer (for example, tamoxifen, anastrozole, exemestan and letrozole) or hormonal injections for breast and prostate cancers (for example, Zoladex/Goserelin, leuprorelin) - you can get vaccinated at any time via your GP surgery or a community COVID-19 vaccination hub.
- If you are using an anti-cancer tablet (chemotherapy or any targeted cancer therapy) and there is a rest period (or rest week) from the tablet - a sensible time to get vaccination is during the rest period off your tablet.
- If you are on a daily or continuous anti-cancer tablet treatment (chemotherapy or any targeted cancer therapy) - it is reasonable to get vaccinated on any day you are not feeling unwell. It might be sensible to plan the vaccination after your routine monitoring blood test or after your routine oncology/haematology clinic appointment if one is coming up very soon.

## **Do I still need to continue social distancing, hand washing and face covering rules after my vaccine?**

Yes, you definitely do - for multiple reasons. It takes time for immunity to build up and even after the second dose; the protection is not 100%. Sticking to the rules helps protect other vulnerable patients and family members who have not been vaccinated yet. Reducing transmission will protect the NHS which means reducing the risk of cancer services being disrupted.

## **Will the vaccine prevent me from transmitting the coronavirus?**

We do not know this yet. Scientists are studying this question at the moment. You must assume that you can transmit or pass the virus on even after vaccination. That is why you

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need to stick to the rules for social distancing, hand washing and face covering.

## What are the common COVID-19 vaccine side effects?

Most side effects of the vaccine are mild and should not last longer than a week, such as:

- a sore arm where the needle went in
- feeling tired
- a headache
- feeling achy
- feeling or being sick

You can take painkillers, such as paracetamol, if you need to.

**If you have a high temperature you may have coronavirus or another infection. If you are on active cancer treatment, you need to contact the UHS Acute Oncology Service for advice on: 023 8120 1345.**

## Where can I get more advice or information about the COVID-19 vaccines?

There is further information on the following websites:

### NHS England COVID-19 vaccination information

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/?priority-taxon=774cee22-d896-44c1-a611-e3109cce8eae](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/?priority-taxon=774cee22-d896-44c1-a611-e3109cce8eae)

### Cancer Research UK - COVID-19 vaccine and cancer

[www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/cancer-in-general/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccine-and-cancer](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/cancer-in-general/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccine-and-cancer)

### Macmillan Cancer Support - Coronavirus vaccine for people living with cancer

[www.macmillan.org.uk/coronavirus/vaccine](http://www.macmillan.org.uk/coronavirus/vaccine)

### British Society for Immunology - A guide to vaccinations for COVID-19

[www.immunology.org/public-information/guide-vaccinations-for-covid-19](http://www.immunology.org/public-information/guide-vaccinations-for-covid-19)

## Contact us

Cancer care COVID-19 vaccination enquiry desk: **023 8120 5518**

Reschedule your COVID-19 vaccination: **023 8120 2393** (9am to 4pm, seven days a week).

For a translation of this document, or a version in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **0800 484 0135** or email [patientsupporthub@uhs.nhs.uk](mailto:patientsupporthub@uhs.nhs.uk)

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit [www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport)