

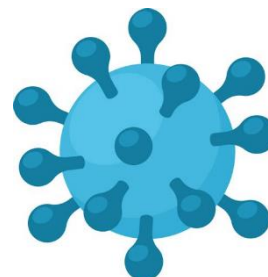
July 2021

## **COVID information for people new to the UK**

The United Kingdom has experienced a very high rate of infection during the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, the UK government brought in economic and social restrictions to stop the spread of the virus.

Since then, a large proportion of the population in the UK has been vaccinated against the disease by the UK National Health Service (NHS). Everyone over 18 has been offered vaccination.

The people who have received the vaccine are now more protected against getting seriously ill from COVID-19.



Because most people in the UK are vaccinated, the Government has removed most of the legal social and economic restrictions. This means that some people may no longer be keeping a social distance from others or wearing masks in public.

### **Current COVID rates in the UK**

COVID-19 continues to be at very high levels in the UK community. Cases continue to rise and people who have had the vaccine can still spread the virus to others. COVID rates are also high amongst children and young people who have not been vaccinated and may not display symptoms.

If you are not vaccinated or have only had your vaccination very recently, you are most at risk of becoming seriously ill if you catch the virus.

**The best way to protect yourself, and your family is to get the COVID vaccine.**

Research has shown the vaccines help by:

- Reducing your risk of getting seriously ill or dying from COVID-19
- Reducing your risk of catching or spreading COVID-19
- Protecting against COVID-19 variants

The vaccination is free of charge and is available to everyone over 18 years of age who lives in the UK.

No questions will be asked about your immigration status or your nationality.

The British Islamic Medical Association recommends that the vaccine is suitable for those in the Muslim community.

## How to get a vaccination

If you are registered with a GP (a General Practitioner at a doctors surgery), you can ask them for a vaccination appointment or arrange an appointment through the national booking service at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

If you are not registered with a GP, you can still get the vaccine. You might need to attend a walk-in vaccine clinic. You can phone 119 for information on where to go close to where you live.



You will need to get 2 doses of the vaccine. The 1<sup>st</sup> dose should give you some protection from 3 or 4 weeks after you have had it. You need 2 doses for stronger and longer-lasting protection and the GP or vaccination clinic will advise you when you need to return for your second dose.

It is normal to feel a little unwell after getting the vaccine, but if you have concerns you can contact your GP or phone 111 for advice.

### How else can I protect myself whilst I am waiting for the vaccine to be fully effective?

- 1. Keep Your Distance** - Staying two or more meters apart will limit the chance of airborne particles carrying the virus from reaching you. When possible, keep away from crowds or people you would not usually live or work with.
- 2. Keep it Quick** - If you must be near others, then it is best to do so as quickly as you can.
- 3. Keep Clean** - It is important to wash your hands regularly with soap and water, or hand sanitiser. It is important to wash your hands after coughing or sneezing into your hands, before eating food or after touching something others have touched.
- 4. Wear a Mask** – Wearing a mask will reduce the risk of becoming infected and will provide you with an extra layer of protection. It will also protect those around you, including people who for some reason cannot be vaccinated. Legal rules on mask wearing do change so you might see other people without masks on. The government expects and recommends that people will continue to wear face coverings in crowded spaces such as public transport and in health settings like hospitals and doctors surgeries.
- 5. Fresh Air** – COVID spreads more easily in enclosed spaces. Meet outdoors where you can, and open windows and doors to let in fresh air if you do meet others indoors.
- 6. Test regularly** when you don't have symptoms. You can get free tests delivered to your home or collect them from a pharmacy.

## **Get tested if you have symptoms**

The most important symptoms of Covid-19 are:

- a new continuous cough.
- a high temperature.
- a change, or loss of, your normal sense of taste or smell.

If you have any of the symptoms, you can call NHS 119 to book a free Covid-19 test. You should arrange a test even if you have been vaccinated against Covid-19 or if you have had Covid-19 before.

## **Isolate if you test positive**

Taking all the measures above should reduce your risk of catching COVID. However, if you do test positive or are contacted by the national Test and Trace service, it is a legal requirement for you to self-isolate at home.

## **The vaccine is free of charge**

Most health treatment in the UK is free and available to anyone who needs it as part of the National Health Service (NHS). This includes COVID-19 vaccination, testing and treatment, visiting a GP doctor and treatment in a hospital Accident and Emergency department.



Any free NHS treatment you receive, or any help with NHS costs, won't affect your immigration status in the UK.

More information on health costs is available on the Citizens Advice website:

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk).