



Please refer to the Vaccine Intranet Area to ensure you have the latest version of the Mythbusters/FAQs.

Covid-19 Vaccine Mythbusters

It is hugely important for all colleagues who have not yet had the Covid-19 vaccine to book their appointment as soon as they can.

There have been many rumours, false claims and myths around the vaccine. Here we tackle and debunk a few of the most common myths to help you feel safe and informed.

Vaccine ingredients

The vaccine does not contain meat products

There are no meat derivatives or porcine products – including gelatin – in the Pfizer or AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccines.

The vaccine does not include any parts from foetal or animal origin

There is no material of foetal or animal origin in either vaccine. All ingredients are published in healthcare information on the MHRA's website.

For the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine information is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-approval-of-pfizer-biontech-vaccine-for-covid-19>

For the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine information is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-approval-of-covid-19-vaccine-astrazeneca>

Pregnancy and fertility

Women who are trying to become pregnant do not need to avoid pregnancy after vaccination

The Royal College of Obstetricians strongly supports women in at risk groups being vaccinated before pregnancy because of the increased risks of COVID infection in pregnancy to the mother and baby.

Is the vaccine safe in pregnancy?

There is no evidence that any of the COVID-19 vaccines are unsafe if you're pregnant. But more evidence is needed before pregnant women can be routinely offered the vaccine. The USA has recently reported that over 20,000 pregnant women have received COVID-19 vaccinations.

The JCVI has updated its advice to recommend you may be able to have the vaccine if you're pregnant and:

- at high risk of getting coronavirus infection because of where you work;
- have a health condition that means you're at high risk of serious complications of coronavirus infection.

For MFT staff a referral process to the obstetrics team at Saint Mary's Hospital is in place to support staff with decisions around vaccination. The team will discuss the risks and benefits of vaccination and will prescribe and book a vaccine appointment if an eligible pregnant woman wishes to be vaccinated.

Does the vaccine affect fertility?

There is no scientific evidence to suggest that the vaccine could cause infertility in women.

If I am pregnant and don't know, will the vaccine harm the baby?

There is no evidence that the COVID-19 vaccine is unsafe if you're pregnant. If you do discover you are pregnant at the time of vaccination this should be reported to PHE to allow evidence of safety to be collected. Your obstetrician or GP can do this for you.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/vaccination-in-pregnancy-vip>

If I get pregnant after the first dose, what do I do about the second dose?

If you receive a dose of the vaccine before finding out you are pregnant, or unintentionally while you are pregnant, you should be reassured that it will not affect the vaccine's success and the risk of harm to your baby is very low.

You will be referred to the obstetric service to help you decide whether to complete the vaccination course within 12 weeks or to leave receiving the second dose until after completion of your pregnancy.

Is the vaccine safe for breastfeeding mothers?

JCVI has recommended that the vaccine can be received whilst breastfeeding. This is in line with recommendations in the US and from the World Health Organisation.

More information is available from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) [here](#).

How the vaccine works, safety and side effects

The vaccine works like other vaccines, by stimulating the immune system

The vaccine works by making a protein from the virus that is important for creating protection.

The protein works in the same way they do for other vaccines by stimulating the immune system to make antibodies and cells to fight the infection.

The vaccine cannot alter your genetic material

There is no evidence to suggest that individual genetic material will undergo an alteration after receiving the vaccine.

Vaccinations are not offered unless they are approved as safe

The NHS will not offer any Covid-19 vaccinations to the public until independent experts have signed off that it is safe to do so.

The MHRA, the official UK regulator, have said that both of these vaccines have good safety profiles and offer a high level of protection, and we have full confidence in their expert judgement and processes. As with any medicine, vaccines are highly regulated products.

There are checks at every stage in the development and manufacturing process, and continued monitoring once it has been authorised and is being used in the wider population.

The vaccine has been given to more than 10 million people already

MFT has vaccinated almost 50,000 people as of 23rd February 2021, over 18,000 staff members. Well over 10 million people have now had their first dose of the vaccines in England alone, including more than nine out of ten people aged 75 or over.

The Covid-19 vaccinations have been approved by the MHRA, the official UK regulator, like all other medicines and devices. This means we are confident they are safe and effective.

The vaccines have undergone months of rigorous testing, including with people from a range of ethnic backgrounds and health conditions, and are recommended for the vast majority of people.

The vaccine provides protection from developing moderate to severe Covid-19

The time it takes to develop immunity is around three weeks and the trial data suggests that there is a very high degree of protection from the vaccine. However it is important that you follow the recommended PPE. The vaccines do not stop the coronavirus from entering your body; it only prevents you from developing moderate to severe Covid-19.

Small variations in strains rarely render vaccines ineffective

There is no evidence currently that the new strains will be resistant to the vaccines we have, so we are continuing to vaccinate people as normal. Scientists are looking now in detail at the characteristics of the virus in relation to the vaccines. Viruses, such as the winter flu virus, often branch into different strains but these small variations rarely render vaccines ineffective.

No significant side effects have been observed in tens of thousands of people

These are important details which the MHRA always consider when assessing candidate vaccines for use.

For these vaccines, like lots of others, they have identified that some people might feel slightly unwell, but they report that no significant side effects have been observed in the tens of thousands of people involved in trials.

All patients will be provided with information on the vaccine they have received, how to look out for any side effects, and what to do if they do occur, including reporting them to the MHRA.

More information on possible side effects can be found here

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/>

Testing of the vaccine with high risk groups

The vaccine testing included high risk groups

For both vaccines trial participants included a range of those from various ages, immune-compromised and those with underlying health conditions, and both found the efficacy of the vaccine translates through all the subgroups.

Details of trial participants for both vaccines are published online.

For the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine information is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-approval-of-pfizer-biontech-vaccine-for-covid-19>

For the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine information is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-approval-of-covid-19-vaccine-astrazeneca>

Shielding, Disability, Health Conditions or Allergies

Most staff who are Shielding, have a Disability, Health Condition or Allergy, are safe to have a vaccine.

The majority of staff even if they are shielding, have a health condition, disability, allergy etc, can have the vaccine.

Please complete your online health questionnaire and if you have any of the contraindications, you will be referred through to a doctor-led clinic for assessment of suitability. A minority of individuals will need an assessment at a doctor-led clinic and a decision will be made in conjunction with specialists if required.

If staff have a condition which is not covered by the contraindications and are concerned, they should discuss their pre-existing medical conditions with their own specialist/GP.

Some staff who have been shielding have expressed nervousness at attending a clinic after a period of isolation. Please be assured that the clinics are all COVID safe, social distancing is in place and IPC guidelines are rigidly followed.

Safety of vaccination clinics

Vaccination clinics are Covid safe

Hospitals are very safe locations for vaccination and a great deal of care has been taken in setting up the clinics. Please be assured that the clinics are all Covid safe, social distancing is of course in place and IPC guidelines are followed. Feedback has been taken on board and responded to where additional space has been required.

If you have any concerns at all, please speak to your line manager and contact Employee Health and Wellbeing for reassurance in getting your vaccination.

Vaccination for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Staff

Why are Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Staff being encouraged to have the vaccine?

We encourage our BAME colleagues to have their vaccine as soon as possible as there is clear evidence that some Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups have higher rates of infection, and higher rates of serious disease, morbidity and mortality.

National guidance has confirmed that societal factors, such as occupation, household size, deprivation, and access to healthcare can increase susceptibility to Covid-19 and worsen outcomes following infection.

Trial participants were reflective of a multi-ethnic population

The Covid-19 vaccinations have been approved by the MHRA, the official UK regulator, like all other medicines and devices. This means we are confident they are safe and effective.

The vaccines have undergone months of rigorous testing, including with people from a range of ethnic backgrounds and health conditions, and are recommended for the vast majority of people.

The Public Assessment Reports contain all the scientific information about the trials and information on trial participants. There is no evidence either of the vaccines will work differently in different ethnic groups.

Getting vaccinated around Ramadan

Getting the Covid-19 vaccination (1st or 2nd dose) during Ramadan does not invalidate the fast

BIMA (British Islamic Medical Association) advises that getting the Covid-19 vaccination (1st or 2nd dose) during Ramadan does not invalidate the fast and individuals should not delay booking their vaccination during this time.

Confidentiality of your personal information

Your information is kept confidential

Please be assured that your personal health information is held securely on your record and treated in confidence and in line Data Protection requirements. Should you have any questions, please contact Employee Health and Wellbeing ehw@mft.nhs.uk or phone 0161 2764289

Having the vaccine post-Covid illness

You can still get vaccinated if you have already had Covid-19

Some staff who have had Covid-19 don't think they need the vaccine however it is advised that the vaccination is just as important for those who have already had Covid-19 as it is for those who haven't, including those who have mild residual symptoms.

Where people are suffering significant ongoing complications from Covid-19 they should discuss whether or not to have a vaccine now with a clinician.

For a full list of FAQs, updated regularly, and a range of information and resources, please visit the [intranet area here](#). You can also find [mythbuster and explainer vlogs here](#).