Coronavirus
COVID-19

Vaccine information

26th January 2021

What is COVID-19 coronavirus?

COVID-19 is a very infectious illness which can cause serious illness, hospitalisation and even death. COVID-19 is caused by a new type of Coronavirus that was discovered in December 2019.

Why is it important to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Some people who get COVID-19 can get serious complications which make them very sick. People with Covid-19 may need treatment in hospital or in intensive care. COVID-19 can even cause people to die. There is no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you if you get it. And if you get sick, the virus could spread to other people like your family and friends.

The COVID-19 vaccines will offer you protection from COVID-19.

Vaccines teach your immune system how to protect you from disease. COVID-19 vaccines are effective at stopping people from getting sick with COVID-19. If you have been vaccinated, when you come into contact with COVID-19 infection, your immune system should stop the infection from making you sick. Some people might still get COVID-19 even after having the vaccine.

Who should get a COVID-19 vaccine?

At the moment, the HSE is offering a COVID-19 vaccine to the following groups first:

- people aged 65 years and older who live in long-term care facilities – because they have a greater risk of getting very sick or dying from COVID-19

- frontline healthcare workers – because they have a higher risk of being exposed to COVID-19

After that, the vaccine will be offered to older people and then to more groups of people. The Government has decided which groups of people should get their vaccine first, and you can read more about that on the **gov.ie** website **https://bit.ly/3iOGfK1**

Don't worry, the HSE will let you know when it is your turn to get the vaccine.

Are COVID-19 vaccines safe?

COVID-19 vaccines used in Ireland are safe. All vaccines used in the Republic of Ireland must be approved by the European Medicines Agency (EMA). The EMA only approves vaccines once they are satisfied that they are safe and effective.

Because COVID-19 has caused a crisis all around the world, lots of work is being done by experts in many countries. These experts have worked together to develop safe vaccines as quickly as possible. But COVID-19 vaccines that are used in Ireland and approved by the EMA must still go through the same safety and effectiveness assessments that all other vaccines and medicines go through before they are approved.

In Ireland, the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) works to make sure that side effects that people get are reported and followed up.

Are there any side effects from COVID-19 vaccines?

Like all medicines, vaccines can have side effects. The side effects are mostly mild or moderate and include things like having a sore arm or itching in the part where the injection was given, feeling tired, feeling sick, swollen lymph glands in the arm where the vaccine was given, body chills or feeling like you have a fever. Some people don't get any side effects at all.

More rarely, people experience sleeplessness, or temporary weakness in their face muscles. The side effects from a COVID-19 vaccine are similar to the side effects that you can get from other vaccines. We know this from looking at the results of clinical trials, and from the reports from the millions of people around the world who have already been vaccinated.

We know that serious side effects to vaccines, like an allergic reaction, are extremely rare. As more people in Ireland and around the world get this vaccine, the HSE will update our website with any new information. You can report any side effects you experience to the HPRA at **www.hpra.ie.**

Do I have to get a COVID-19 vaccine? Is it mandatory?

When the vaccine is available for you, it is your choice whether to get it. You will be shown a HSE information leaflet about the vaccine, and asked by the person who gives you the vaccine to give your consent. It is important that you have all the information you need to help you make the decision that is right for you. Never be afraid to ask the person vaccinating you any questions you might have.

Do I still need to wear a mask, keep my distance and wash my hands after I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

The vaccine is just one way we have to protect ourselves from COVID-19. There is still a small chance you might get COVID-19 after you have had the vaccine. There is also a chance that you might spread COVID-19, even if you don't get sick yourself. That is why it is so important to hold firm, and continue to follow HSE and government advice about washing your hands, keeping your distance and wearing a face covering.

Where can I go to get reliable information about the COVID-19 that I can trust?

There is lots of information on-line and in the media about COVID-19 vaccines. It is important that the information you get is reliable information from experts in healthcare. This will help you make the decisions you need to make about your own health. Talking to your GP, practice nurse or pharmacist can be a good place to start.

If you do go on-line, make sure you go to a website that gives you information that is truthful and based on science. The HSE website **HSE.ie** has lots of information about COVID-19 and the COVID-19 vaccines. This information has been prepared by vaccine experts who work in Ireland, and is based on the most up-to-date research. You can also call HSELive on 1850 24 1850.

More detailed information is available at the national immunisation website **immunisation.ie**. If you want to read more detail about the COVID-19 vaccines, there is excellent information available on the website of the European Medicines Agency **https://www.ema.europa.eu/en**. You can also find information on the World Health Organisation website.

Useful links and contacts

www.hse.ie/covid-19-vaccine/

https://bit.ly/35RdHdd short link to Health Products Regulatory Authority website

https://bit.ly/3bTUv2o short link to European Medicines Agency website

https://bit.ly/39NleLy short link to HSE Immunisation website

HSE Live: 1850 24 1850   www.hse.ie

NCBI: 1850 33 43 53   www.ncbi.ie