**Important update on the coronavirus vaccines and booster jabs**:

**Vaccination Autumn Booster coming your way soon.**

An extra COVID-19 booster vaccination is available for the most vulnerable people. This will top up their protection levels for coronavirus. People aged 50 years and older, and those in a clinical risk group will be offered a booster of coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine this autumn.

**Who is being offered an autumn booster?**

COVID-19 is more serious in older people and in people with certain underlying health conditions.

This winter it is expected that more people will get respiratory infections, including COVID-19 and flu– this may put increasing pressure on hospitals and other health care services. For these reasons, people aged 50 years and over, and those in clinical risk groups are being offered an autumn booster of COVID-19 vaccine.

The autumn booster is being offered to people who are at a higher risk of suffering from complications if they caught COVID-19, and who may have not had a COVID-19 booster for a few months. As the number of COVID-19 infections increases over the winter, this booster should help to reduce your risk of being admitted to hospital with COVID-19.

**Timing of the autumn booster**

Healthcare staff in your prison will contact you if you are eligible for the autumn booster. If you are unsure if you are eligible, please contact them and they will be able to tell you.

If you are in one of the groups who are eligible for the booster, you should be offered an appointment between now and December. You should have your booster at least 3 months after your last dose of the vaccine.

If you are eligible for a flu vaccine, you may be able to have them at the same time – if not please go ahead anyway, you can catch up with the other vaccine later.

**Which vaccine will you be offered?**

You will be given a booster dose of a vaccine made by Moderna. You may be offered an updated combination version of these booster vaccines – the combination vaccines include a half-dose of the previous vaccine combined with a half-dose of a vaccine against the Omicron variant.

Both of these vaccines boost protection very well, although the combination vaccines produce slightly higher levels of antibody against some strains of Omicron.

As we cannot predict which variants of COVID-19 will be circulating this winter, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) have saidthat both types of vaccine can be used in adults, and that no one should delay vaccination to receive combination vaccines. So, you will be offered the right vaccine for you at the right time.

Please accept the vaccination that is offered to you as soon as you are able to – it is important to have your booster and build up your protection against severe illness before the winter.

**Who cannot take up the offer of an autumn booster?**

There are very few people who should not have this booster. If you have had a severe reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine you should discuss this with healthcare.

**Common side effects**

As with your previous dose, the common side effects are the same for all COVID-19 vaccines, including the combination vaccines being used this autumn, and include:

* having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection – this tends to be worst around 1 to 2 days after the vaccine
* feeling tired
* headache
* general aches or mild flu-like symptoms

You can rest and take paracetamol to help you feel better. Symptoms following vaccination normally last less than a week.

**Can you still catch COVID-19 after having the vaccine?**

The COVID-19 booster will reduce the chance of you becoming severely unwell from COVID-19 this winter. It may take a few days for your body to build up some extra protection from the booster.

Like all medicines, no vaccine is completely effective – some people may still get COVID-19 despite having a vaccination, but any infection should be less severe.

**If you have not had all your vaccinations**

If you have not yet had either of your first 2 doses of the vaccine (or a third dose for those with a weakened immune system) you are encouraged to have them as soon as possible. They are still available through your healthcare, and you can still make an application to get yours.

If you are eligible for the autumn booster but think you have missed a previous booster you should still go ahead – you will not need another dose.

**If you have a COVID-19 positive result, when can you have your autumn booster?**

If you are unwell, wait until you have recovered to have your vaccine. If you have had confirmed COVID-19 you should wait 4 weeks before having your autumn booster.

**Is the vaccine safe?**

Yes. The UK regulator and the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) (the independent experts that advise Government on all vaccines) have assessed all approved vaccines to be safe and able to offer a high level of protection against becoming severely unwell with coronavirus, including for older people.

**Why do we need booster jabs?**

Research has shown that the protection the vaccines provide starts to lessen as time goes on. With a new variant and rising cases, it's important that everyone who is eligible gets their booster.

**Do I need to get my flu vaccine too?**

Yes, it's important to get both your coronavirus booster and your flu jab. They are different vaccinations that will help protect you against different viruses. You may be offered both at the same time. This is perfectly safe and could be more convenient for you.

**What if I have declined previous covid vaccinations?**

Healthcare will be able to advise and organise for you to receive the appropriate vaccinations.

