COVID-19 VACCINE BULLETIN 8

Welcome to the eighth bulletin from the HSE National Immunisation Office which highlights changes in clinical guidance for the COVID-19 vaccination programme. Bulletins will be published every week or more frequently, if required.

COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca® dosing interval

The dosing interval for COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca® is now **12 weeks for all age groups.** (The National Immunisation Advisory Committee recommends an interval of 8-12 weeks between doses for all age-groups)

If the interval between doses is longer than 12 weeks, the second dose should still be given. The course does not need to be restarted.

There is no change to the minimum dosing interval:
- The minimum interval is 4 weeks (28 days).
- If the interval between doses is less than 28 days, a further dose is not required.
- If the second dose was given between 24 and 27 days after the first dose, it is a valid dose.

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Lancet publication on efficacy of COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca®

"Single – dose administration and the influence of the timing of the booster dose on immunogenicity and efficacy of ChAdOx1 nCov-10(AZD1222) vaccine: a pooled analysis of four randomised trials"

A single standard dose of COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca® provided protection against symptomatic COVID-19 in the first 90 days with an efficacy of 76·0% (95% CI 59·3 to 85·9), these was no evidence of waning of protection in the first three months after vaccination.

Vaccine efficacy after two doses was 81·3% (60·3–91·2) when the two doses were given 12 weeks or more apart. Efficacy was 55.1% (95% CI 33.0–69.9) with an interval of less than 6 weeks.

Efficacy of a single standard dose against any laboratory confirmed positive infection was 63·9% (46·0 to 75·9) from 22 days to 90 days, suggesting the potential for a substantial reduction in transmission, although these results are exploratory and need further investigation.

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Effectiveness of Comirnaty® Pfizer/BioNtech COVID-19 Vaccine in Israel published in the New England Journal of Medicine

Results from a new study of over 1 million people in Israel were published this week. Half received Comirnaty® Pfizer/ BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine and half were unvaccinated. The results showed 2-3 weeks after the first dose, the vaccine was 46% effective at preventing COVID-19 infection and 62% effective at preventing severe disease. Seven days after the second dose the vaccine effectiveness increased to 92% at preventing COVID-19 infection and 92% effective at preventing severe disease.

This study showed Comirnaty® Pfizer/ BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine is highly effective for preventing symptomatic disease in a real life setting similar to the vaccine efficacy reported in the clinical trials. The study also suggests vaccine effectiveness is high for the more serious outcomes: hospitalisation, severe illness, and death.

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Pre-print Lancet paper on the impact of 1st dose of Comirnaty® Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine and COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca® on preventing hospital admissions

This study looked at the real-world effects of Comirnaty® Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine and COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca® by estimating the effectiveness of the first dose of these COVID-19 vaccines in preventing hospital admissions in Scotland.

Surveillance data on cases was linked to primary care data, testing results, hospitalisation and mortality records for 5.4 million people in Scotland to estimate the effectiveness of vaccines to prevent COVID-19 related hospitalisation following the first dose of vaccine.

The first dose of the Comirnaty® Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine was associated with a vaccine effect of 85% for COVID-19 related hospitalisation at 28-34 days post-vaccination. Vaccine effect at the same time interval for the COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca® was 94%. Results of combined vaccine effect for prevention of COVID-19 related hospitalisation were similar in people aged ≥80 years (81%; 95% CI 65 to 90 at 28-34 days post-vaccination).

In summary, this study concluded that a single dose of the Comirnaty® Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine and AstraZeneca® vaccines resulted in substantial reductions in the risk of COVID-19 related hospitalisation in Scotland.

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Public Health England (PHE) monitoring of the early impact of COVID-19 of Vaccination in England

PHE have summarised the early data on the impact and effectiveness of the Comirnaty® Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine in England. Outcomes studied post vaccination included rates of symptomatic disease, hospitalisation, death and infection.

Using available surveillance and testing data they calculated an odds ratio of having laboratory confirmed COVID-19 post vaccination at different time intervals starting after the first dose of vaccine, including in those aged over those over 80 years.

Vaccine effectiveness in over 80 year olds was 57% (95% CI 48-63%) from 28 days after the first dose of vaccination. Protection after the second dose rose to 88% after 7 days (95% CI 84-90%).

There was evidence of a lower rate of admission to hospital 9% and 15.3% and lower risk of death 5.8% versus 13.4% in vaccinated versus unvaccinated people 14 days after vaccination and this lower rate continued up to at least 21 days in people aged over 80 years.

PHE conclude that these observations are consistent with a higher level of protection (probably above 75%) against severe disease from a single dose of Comirnaty® Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine in the over 80s and that those that do develop symptomatic COVID-19 infection after vaccination have less severe outcomes.

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HPRA Safety Update: COVID-19 Vaccines — Overview of National Reporting Experience — 18 February 2021

HPRA have published their latest safety update: The cumulative total doses of COVID 19 vaccines administered as of the 18th February 2021 was reported as 171,239 (dose 1) and 89,834 (dose 2), with administration of COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca® commencing 8 February. Up to 11 February, a total of 2103 reports of suspected side effects were notified to the HPRA.

For all COVID-19 vaccines, the most commonly reported suspected side effects notified to the HPRA were in line with those typically associated with vaccination including COVID-19 vaccines and to date the reports continues to support the favourable assessment that the benefits of COVID-19 vaccines outweigh the risks.

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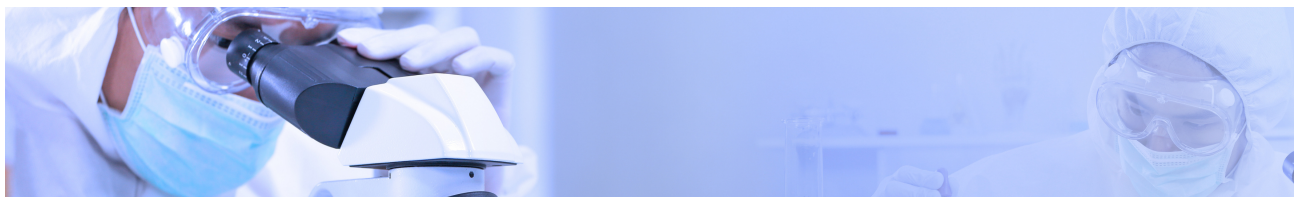
HSE COVID-19 Vaccine Development Video

The HSE has developed a short video showing the steps involved in COVID-19 vaccines development.

Watch the video now on the **HSE YouTube channel**. We also encourage you to share this video on your social media channels.

Watch It Here

The Department of Health has published an updated list of the provisional order in which people in Ireland will be vaccinated.

The order of priority groups for COVID-19 vaccination has changed. The next groups are:

1. Those aged 16 - 69 years with medical conditions associated with a very high risk of severe COVID-19 and all those aged 65-69 years.

Based on national and international evidence, the at-risk medical conditions has been divided into those associated with very high and high risk for severe COVID-19 disease. Those aged 16-69 with very high-risk conditions are at a similar risk of severe COVID-19 as those aged 70-74 years.

2. Those aged 65 to 69 years at high risk of severe COVID-19.

3. Others aged 65-69, unvaccinated healthcare workers and those providing services essential to the vaccination programme.

4. All others aged 16 – 64 with high risk medical conditions.

NIAC will next look at the priority for other groups including those working or living in high-risk situations, carers and those who are socially vulnerable or disadvantaged.

Read Updated Chapter in the Immunisation Guidelines Here

This is the provisional order in which people in Ireland will be vaccinated against COVID-19.

1	People aged 65 years and older who are residents of long-term care facilities (likely to include all staff and residents on site)
2	Frontline healthcare workers
3	People aged 70 and older
4	People aged 16-69 with a medical condition that puts them at very high risk of severe disease and death
5	People aged 65-69 whose underlying condition puts them at a high risk of severe disease and death
6	Other people aged 65-69, other healthcare workers not in direct patient contact, and key workers essential to the vaccine programme
7	People aged 16-64 who have an underlying condition that puts them at high risk of severe disease and death
8	Residents of long-term care facilities aged 18-64
9	People aged 18-64 living or working in crowded settings
10	Key workers in essential jobs who cannot avoid a high risk of exposure
11	People working in education sector
12	People aged 55-64
13	Other workers in occupations important to the functioning of society
14	Other people aged 18-54
15	People aged under 18 and pregnant women

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Contact details for queries regarding the COVID-19 vaccination programme:

- For Covid-19 Vaccine queries, please visit **https://www.hse.ie/covid19vaccine** or contact HSELive **https://www.hse.ie/eng/hselive/**

- For queries regarding COVID-19 vaccine orders or deliveries to GPs, please email **gpvaccines@hse.ie**

- For vaccinations carried out in General Practice: please email your vaccine traceability forms to: **philip.charles.desmond@pwc.com**

- Health Professionals for your own COVID-19 vaccination appointments, please email **Covid19.support@hse.ie**

- Legal queries, potential challenges related to vaccination and obtaining a consent, please email **lead.integratedcare@hse.ie** and **dervelagray@rcpi.ie**

- For clinical queries and queries relating to cold chain maintenance or breakdown, please e-mail **immunisation@hse.ie**

*Recommendations about COVID-19 vaccine are changing as more information becomes available so please check our **website** for the most up to date information.*