



Dear Colleague,

## SPRING COVID-19 VACCINATION PROGRAMME 2024

We are writing to provide you with further information on the spring COVID-19 vaccination programme 2024 which will run from 1 April 2024 to 30 June 2024.

### Key Objectives

1. The primary aim of the COVID-19 vaccination programme has always been the prevention of severe COVID-19 disease, hospitalisation and death in those most at risk and for 2024 this remains unchanged. However the programme has begun to transition from a pandemic response to that of routine immunisation.

### Eligibility

2. For spring 2024, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises that a COVID-19 vaccine should be offered to:
  - All adults aged 75 years and over
  - Residents in care homes for older adults
  - Individuals aged 6 months and over who are immunosuppressed (as defined in tables 3 and 4 in the [COVID-19 chapter of the Green Book](#))

The link to the JCVI's published statement can be found here: [COVID-19 spring 2024 and future vaccination programmes: JCVI advice, 4 December 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

### Programme Age Limits

3. To be eligible this spring, an individual must turn 75 years of age on or before 30 June 2024. For infants in the programme, they must turn 6 months of age on or before 31 March 2024 to be eligible.

**From Chief Medical Officer  
Chief Nursing Officer  
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer**

Professor Sir Gregor Smith  
Professor Alex McMahon  
Professor Alison Strath

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#### Addresses

##### For action

Chief Executives, NHS Boards  
Medical Directors, NHS Boards  
Nurse Directors, NHS Boards  
Primary Care Leads, NHS Boards  
Directors of Nursing & Midwifery, NHS Boards  
Chief Officers of Integration Authorities  
Chief Executives, Local Authorities  
Directors of Pharmacy  
Directors of Public Health  
General Practitioners  
Practice Nurses  
School Nurses  
Immunisation Co-ordinators  
CPHMs  
Scottish Ambulance Service

##### For information

Chairs, NHS Boards  
Infectious Disease Consultants  
Consultant Physicians  
Public Health Scotland  
Chief Executive, Public Health Scotland, NHS 24

#### Further Enquiries

**COVID-19 Policy Issues**  
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**Medical Issues**  
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**PGD/Pharmaceutical**  
William Malcolm  
Public Health Scotland  
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**Vaccine Supply Issues**  
[nss.vaccineenquiries@nhs.scot](mailto:nss.vaccineenquiries@nhs.scot)



## Dosage interval

4. The JCVI advise that the spring dose be offered around 6 months after the last vaccine, although operational flexibility around the timing of the spring dose is considered appropriate, with a minimum interval of three months (12 weeks) between doses.

## Vaccines for the programme

5. Full JCVI advice on use of vaccines for the spring 2024 programme can be found in their [published statement](#). Information on approved vaccines in use in Scotland for the programme can be found in **Annex A**. National protocols and patient group directions will be provided by Public Health Scotland (PHS).

## Clinical referral route

6. The clinical referral route has been well established over the last two years of the COVID-19 programme and remains the same for spring 2024.
7. If an individual knows that they are eligible for vaccination this spring as part of the immunosuppressed group, or by virtue of being aged 75 years and older (up to and including 30 June 2024), but they have not been sent an appointment or prompt invitation, they can book via the [portal](#) or by calling the national vaccination helpline on 0800 030 8013.
8. If an individual thinks they may be eligible as part of the immunosuppressed group, but is unsure, they can call the helpline and they will be referred to their local Health Board to ascertain eligibility and bring them forward for vaccination, if required.
9. An individual could also consult their GP practice or secondary care clinician, who can then assess the individual and complete a referral form to refer their case through local referral pathways for vaccination. If GP practices or clinicians are unsure of their local referral pathway, they should contact their local Immunisation team or co-ordinator for more information.
10. There are no changes to the clinical definition of immunosuppression in the [COVID-19: the green book, chapter 14a - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) this spring, although the chapter has been updated with new guidance on additional doses for those with severe immunosuppression, out with seasonal programmes. Clinicians should familiarise themselves with these updates and their local referral mechanisms.

## Changes to post-vaccination observation period

11. At the time of publication of this letter, the Summaries of Product Characteristics recommend that all recipients of the Pfizer BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are kept for observation for a minimum of 15 minutes. In recognition of the need to accelerate delivery of the programme in response to the Omicron variant in 2021, the UK Chief Medical Officers recommended the suspension of this requirement, which was then also agreed by the Commission on Human Medicines. At the time, the Scottish Government decided that the observation period was not to be waived completely, and that all COVID-19 vaccines be followed by a 5 minute observation period.
12. In late 2023 the Scottish Vaccination and Immunisation Programme's (SVIP) Clinical Governance Group met to review this and it was agreed to waive the routine 5 minutes

observation period, but that vaccinators must still advise patients not to drive for 15 minutes after receiving vaccination. Post-vaccination observation advice must also be given to those who receive housebound appointments.

13. Please refer to the [COVID-19: the green book, chapter 14a - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-the-green-book) for more information on observation periods for those with allergies.

## Resources

14. NES/PHS workforce education materials for vaccinators can be found at [COVID-19 vaccination programme | Turas | Learn \(nhs.scot\)](#).
15. Public information, including information to support informed consent, booking and rescheduling of appointments can be found via [www.nhsinform.scot/springvaccine](https://www.nhsinform.scot/springvaccine).

We would like to recognise and express our sincere gratitude for your professionalism and continuing support in planning and delivering this important vaccination programme. Thank you for all your hard work over the winter period and we wish you all the best for the spring 2024 programme.

Yours sincerely,

*Gregor Smith*

Professor Sir Gregor Smith  
**Chief Medical Officer**

*Alex McMahon*

Professor Alex McMahon  
**Chief Nursing Officer**

*Alison Strath*

Professor Alison Strath  
**Chief Pharmaceutical Officer**

## **Annex A: Vaccines in use in Scotland for the spring 2024 COVID-19 programme**

The following vaccines are advised for use in all eligible individuals aged 18 years and over:

- Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA (Comirnaty) Omicron XBB.1.5 vaccine. Dose: 30 micrograms
- Moderna mRNA (Spikevax) XBB.1.5 vaccine. Dose: 50 micrograms

The following vaccines are advised for eligible young people aged 12 to 17 years:

- Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA (Comirnaty) Omicron XBB.1.5 vaccine. Dose: 30 micrograms

The following vaccines are advised for eligible children aged 5 to 11 years:

- Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA (Comirnaty) Omicron XBB.1.5 vaccine. Dose: 10 micrograms

The following vaccines are advised for eligible children aged 6 months to 4 years:

- Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA (Comirnaty) Omicron XBB.1.5 vaccine. Dose: 3 micrograms

Novavax Matrix-M adjuvanted COVID-19 vaccine (Nuvaxovid - latest authorised and available vaccine) may be used as a booster dose for persons aged 12 years and above when alternative products are considered not clinically suitable.