FAQ on Vaccine Effectiveness and Safety

Vaccine Effectiveness:

How effective is the COVID-19 vaccine?
Not all vaccines prevent transmission and at this stage we don’t know if the Pfizer vaccine will stop you getting Covid-19 or, importantly, stop you from passing it on. However, we do know it will reduce both mortality and morbidity. Full information about the impact of early COVID-19 vaccines, including on whether they could prevent transmission, is not yet available. Until we know more, restrictions will still be needed and it is critical that everyone continues to follow the FACTS and book a test if you feel any symptoms.

Public experience:

How will the vaccine be given?
The vaccine will be given as an injection in the upper arm. During vaccination, strict infection prevention and control measures will be in place.

How long will it take for someone to get the vaccine?
It will only take a few minutes to get the COVID-19 vaccine. However, it is important for people to get both doses to protect yourself against COVID-19.

Where will people get the vaccine?
Vaccinations will be taking place differently across Scotland to reflect the needs of local communities and may not take place at your GP practice. NHS health board’s will confirm local arrangements.

If someone has had COVID-19 before, should they still get the vaccine?
Yes. Even if someone has already had COVID-19, they could still get it again. Therefore the vaccine will reduce someone’s risk of getting COVID-19 and can reduce how serious the symptoms will be if someone does get COVID-19 again.

If you have recently tested positive for COVID-19 – even if you have no symptoms – you should wait until four weeks after the date you were tested to get the vaccine.

Can the COVID-19 vaccine be given at the same time as other vaccines?
People should ideally wait seven days between the COVID-19 vaccination and any other vaccination.

Are there any reasons someone should not get the vaccine?
Someone should not get the COVID-19 vaccine if they have had a severe reaction to any of the ingredients in the vaccine or a previous dose of the vaccine. This will affect very few people but the person giving the vaccine will be happy to answer any questions someone has, at their appointment.

The vaccine is not recommended for women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy as it has not been tested on pregnant women. Pregnancy should also be avoided for at least two
months after the second dose of the vaccine. If someone is breastfeeding, they should wait until they have finished breastfeeding, in order to have the vaccine.

Visit nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine or call 0800 030 8013 for more information.

**Vaccine safety:**

**Q. How do we know the vaccine is safe?**

Each vaccine goes through a rigorous and independent three-phase testing process long before it can be licensed as safe and effective for use. Regulators such as the European Medicines Agency and the UK’s Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency review trial results and decide whether to approve the vaccine. During a pandemic, the timeframes can be compressed, but never at the expense of safety. This will be the case for all other COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in the UK.

**Q. What regulation is in place for COVID-19 vaccines?**

The regulation of vaccines, like other medicines, is reserved to the UK Government, and is covered by the Human Medicines Regulations 2012. Every vaccine to be used in the UK will be subject to approval, either via the European Medicines Agency or, after the end of the EU transition period on 31 December, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency. The regulatory authority will review the clinical evidence to check that the drug is acceptably effective, safe and meets manufacturing quality standards.

**Q. What if I have an adverse reaction to my vaccination?**

As with all vaccination scheme, there will be medical teams on site, so that in the rare instances where someone has an adverse reaction, help is close at hand.

**Q. How will you monitor issues with the vaccine?**

The safety of all vaccines and medicines is monitored by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) on a UK wide basis. The well-established UK yellow card scheme is a system for collecting and monitoring information on suspected safety concerns or incidents involving medicines and medical devices. It allows health professionals and patients across the UK to flag up suspected adverse reactions to any vaccine or medicine, as well as collating reports from worldwide use and on-going scientific evidence.

Please be assured that the MHRA keep the safety of all vaccines under close and continual review, and would take appropriate regulatory action if new evidence emerged which called into question the safety of any vaccines in use in Scotland.
Q. What is the role of the JCVI?

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) provides independent scientific advice on immunisation to all UK Health Departments, including on the efficacy and safety of vaccines and priority groups to be vaccinated.

Q. Will you just be relying on what the JCVI say?

In addition to the advice from JCVI, the safety of all vaccines and medicines is monitored by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) on a UK wide basis. the Scottish Government will be guided by advice from the JCVI, SAGE, Health Protection Scotland and the Interim Chief Medical Officer.

Q. How is Scotland represented within the JCVI?

Scotland is represented at the JCVI by a Senior Medical Officer from the office of the Scottish Chief Medical Officer, and by clinicians from Health Protection Scotland (HPS) who play a vital role in ensuring the health of the Scottish population by providing advice, support and information to health professionals, local and national government, the general public and a number of other bodies.

Q. Does the decision on what vaccine is used in Scotland lie with the JCVI?

No, the JCVI do not make decisions on what vaccines to purchase. The JCVI’s role is to make recommendations on whether a vaccination programme should be introduced (i.e. it is it likely to be effective and cost effective), rather than simply which vaccine to purchase. In assessing whether a programme can be considered cost effective, the JCVI takes comments from both members and observers, which means that the representatives from Scotland have the opportunity to feed into the modelling and analysis of each potential programme before the Committee make a recommendation.

Q. What is the JCVI’s recommendation for the prioritisation of the COVID-19 vaccines?

On 2 December the JCVI published its recommendation on priority groups for Covid vaccinations with the Pfizer vaccine based on the clinical evidence. Priority groups for coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination: advice from the JCVI, 2 December 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

The recommendation states that vaccinations should be prioritised in this order:

1. Residents in care homes for older adults and their carers
2. All those over 80 years of age and Frontline health and social care workers
3. All those 75 years of age and over
4. All those over 70 years of age and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals
5. All those 65 years of age and over
6. All individuals aged 16 years to 64 years with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality; unpaid carers
7. All those 60 years of age and over
8. All those 55 years of age and over
9. All those 50 years of age and over