

# Scottish autism

WHERE AUTISTIC PEOPLE  
ARE VALUED

## COVID-19 Vaccines: Question and Answers

COVID-19 vaccines are now available and certain groups of people are now being offered these ([Groups can be found here.](#))

When invited for your appointment you may feel anxious about going to your appointment and receiving the vaccines. If you feel anxious then you can either contact the vaccine helpline on 0800 030 8013 or speak to your GP to talk through what to expect. On the day of your appointment, you can also let the person giving you the vaccine know that you are feeling anxious. They will be understanding and can support you. You may also want to talk about what may help you to relax and other strategies of support (e.g. listening to music, 'stimming').

In the meantime, we have tried to answer some questions people may have in relation to the COVID-19 vaccines below.

### **How have these vaccines been developed so quickly?**

Because of the pandemic, developing these vaccines have been prioritised, by scientists, drug companies and governments. There has been a large amount of collaboration which has helped this to happen as fast as possible.

The vaccines that have been developed have all gone through the same amount of testing and safety processes as other vaccines.

### **Are the vaccines safe?**

All medicines, including vaccines are only approved for use after being thoroughly tested for safety and effectiveness.

The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has approved COVID-19 vaccines for use in the UK. This is after having carefully looked at all the evidence about the vaccines and made sure it meets strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness.

As with any medicine or vaccine there are possible side effects and further information about the side effects can be found [here](#).

### **Will I be forced to get the vaccine?**

No, the vaccine is not compulsory. [Consent is required.](#)

### **What if I have already had COVID-19, do I still need the vaccine?**

Yes. Even if you have already had COVID-19 there is still a possibility you could get it again. The vaccines will therefore reduce the risk of developing COVID-19 and making your symptoms milder if you do get it again.

If you test positive for COVID-19 before you have had your vaccine then it is suggested you should wait 4 weeks before you go for your vaccine.

### **When and where will I have to go for my COVID-19 vaccine?**

Your local NHS board will be in touch to arrange your appointment when you are eligible. At present there are only [certain groups of people](#) currently being offered the vaccines.

Across Scotland vaccines are taking place at various different venues and therefore this may not take place at your GP surgery. Your local health board will confirm the arrangement when they get in touch to arrange your appointment.

### **What if I am feeling unwell on the day of my appointment?**

If you are unwell on the day of your appointment you can still go for your vaccine if it's a minor illness without a fever.

If you are feeling very unwell then your vaccine may be postponed.

You should not attend your vaccine appointment if you feel unwell with [symptoms of COVID-19](#). You should follow the steps outlined by [Test and Protect](#).

### **How quickly does the vaccines work? And how long do they last?**

Approximately 12 days after your first dose you will start to build up a level of protection, however it is important to get a second dose for longer lasting protection.

At present it is not known exactly how long protection will last, and this may vary between the different vaccines. It is likely it will be at least several months, but it may be that boosters will be needed in the future. Researchers are studying this closely.

### **After receiving my vaccines will I still be able to catch the virus and pass it on?**

The purpose of the vaccines is to build up your immunity to COVID-19 so your body will fight it off more easily if you were to get it. Meaning reducing the risk of developing COVID-19 and making your symptoms milder if you do get it.

So, even if you have received your vaccines it's really important to still follow COVID-19 guidelines and that you:

- Wear a face covering if you are able to (we recognise that some autistic people are [not able to wear face coverings](#))
- Avoid crowded places
- Wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds
- Keep a two-metre distance between yourself and those who are not in your household
- Self-Isolate and book a test if you have symptoms (this includes [self-isolating](#) if you have been in contact with someone who has symptoms/test positive)