



GMB Position on Vaccinations

All the latest information and advice on vaccinations from GMB

Updated: Thursday 28 January 2021

On 8 December 2020 the UK started rolling out the first phase of Covid-19 vaccinations. The Government's Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) have prioritised who receives the vaccinations first.

The order of priority is:

- 1. residents in a care home for older adults and their carers**
- 2. all those 80 years of age and over and frontline health and social care workers**
- 3. all those 75 years of age and over**
- 4. all those 70 years of age and over 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**
- 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**

We are yet to hear who will be prioritised in the next phase, we are hoping to see all key workers prioritised for the second phase.

If you are in one of the first phase priority groups you should expect to be contacted soon (if you haven't already) and it is now likely that your second dose may have been moved back to 12 weeks' time.

12 weeks is the maximum amount of time between doses and both should be the same type of vaccination. The two types currently being used are Pfizer-BioNTech and AstraZeneca (Oxford), either of these could be offered to you and you will not get a choice in which one you receive.

You should be asked if you have any history of anaphylaxis to food, drugs, other vaccines or insect stings before you go for your appointment, if this applies to you, make sure that they are aware of this. Currently individuals with a history of anaphylaxis to food, an identified drug or vaccine, or an insect sting can receive any COVID-19 vaccine, as long as they are not known to be allergic to any component of the vaccine. All recipients of the Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine should be kept for observation and monitored for a minimum of 15 minutes. Facilities for management of anaphylaxis should be available at all vaccination sites as a precaution.

Vaccination is the clearest route out of lockdown and societal restrictions, as it is likely that the Covid-19 virus will mutate further and become endemic, meaning it is something that is always present and has to be regularly vaccinated against. As such, GMB foresees most workers being vaccinated in due course. However, this is not mandatory, and we understand that some of our members are not able to be vaccinated e.g. for health reasons or pregnancy.

In priority sectors where members have not yet been vaccinated, we expect that no member suffers a financial detriment as a result of not being vaccinated – including being vaccinated in work time, and employers paying transportation costs where needed.

GMB members should discuss any issues or concerns they have with their line manager and contact your local GMB Representative for support if required.

GMB believes that vaccination is necessary to reduce the immediate risk to the most vulnerable in society and our key workers; to mitigate the long-term health conditions that the virus causes for some people; and to secure members' jobs by allowing the economy to re-open for business in a safe way

We encourage members to be vaccinated as soon as the vaccine is made available to them.

We recognise that some GMB members may have medical concerns or equality based issues in receiving the vaccine. Where this is the case, they should seek GMB assistance in setting out their concerns to their employer.

Where members do not have medical conditions or equality concerns but choose not to have the vaccine (as with other vaccines, the COVID19 vaccine has not been made mandatory by the government), we will represent members should workplace issues arise, subject to rule.

However, we urge any member considering adopting this position to be aware of the potential employment ramifications of doing so.

Vaccination refusal may result in disciplinary actions from employers, including potential dismissal, even with GMB representation.

As of January 2021, some employers have already adopted such positions. For members working for such employers, this may lead to unemployment at a time of unprecedented job losses. It can take up to a year to take a claim to tribunal and - assuming there is no argument based on a protected characteristic - the maximum that can be awarded by a tribunal is one year's loss of earnings (and then only in the event that no alternative employment has been found).

As such, GMB urges all members to carefully consider all of the facts and the implications of refusal before deciding whether or not to be vaccinated.

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