

**FAO Primary & Secondary Care
Colleagues
[BY EMAIL ONLY]**

Date 25 March 2025

National COVID- 19 Vaccination
Scheduling Helpline: 0800 030 8013

NHS Lothian
Vaccination Enquiries Line: 0300 790 6296

NHS Lothian Vaccination
Enquiries Team: loth.vaccenquiries@nhs.scot

Dear Colleagues,

COVID-19 SPRING VACCINATION PROGRAMME 2025

We are writing to update you in relation to the COVID-19 spring vaccination programme.

On 14 November 2024 the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) published [its advice](#) on a COVID-19 vaccination programme for this spring.

The [CMO letter](#), dated 19 March 2025 details eligible cohorts for the spring 2025 seasonal COVID-19 vaccination programme.

COVID-19 Administration

The groups below are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine this spring, with appointments starting on 31 March 2025:

- people aged 75 years and over on 30 June 2025 (i.e. born on or before 30 June 1950)
- people who live in a care home for older adults
- people aged 6 months or over (by or on 31 March 2025) who have a weakened immune system as defined in table 3 and 4 of the Green Book, [chapter 14a](#).

Arrangements for COVID-19 vaccination in NHS Lothian are set out in **Annex A**.

Headquarters
Mainpoint
102 West Port
Edinburgh EH3 9DN

Chair Professor John Connaghan CBE
Chief Executive Professor Caroline Hiscox
*Lothian NHS Board is the common
name of Lothian Health Board*

COVID-19 Referrals

- Individuals with anticipated immunosuppression:

Patients in your care who are starting treatment that will result in them being immunosuppressed as set out in table 3 and 4 of the Green Book, [chapter 14a](#) should be advised to contact the National Vaccination Helpline (0800 030 8013) by their clinician to arrange a suitable vaccination appointment. In the case of children aged 6 months to 4 years, please direct their parents or carers to call the NHS Lothian Vaccination Enquiries Line (0300 790 6296).

- Individuals not identified as part of the cohort creation process:

To identify the eligible cohort, analysts conducted searches of General Practice Information (GPIT) systems, records of those eligible for extra COVID-19 treatments (nMAB / antiviral treatment) and Scottish Hospital Records. Whilst every effort is made to correctly identify people who meet the criteria for vaccination, it is likely there will be some people identified who are no longer considered eligible. There will also be people who are eligible but are not picked up through these centralised searches.

Some people considered to be immunosuppressed may not have been identified, particularly those who are about to start, or have recently started receiving chemotherapy or radiotherapy.

Some prescribing data is accessed from secondary care through searches of HEPMA and Home Care databases. This data is incomplete across Scotland and there may be some people who have not been identified who are prescribed immunosuppressant type medications.

Children and young people aged under 16 who have recently started chemotherapy will not be invited as they are not routinely added to the Chemocare database.

Not all people living with HIV will be identified through the GP IT searches, for example if the person is not registered with a GP.

These individuals should be directed to the National Vaccination Helpline (0800 030 8013) by their clinician to arrange a suitable vaccination appointment. In the case of children aged 6 months to 4 years, please direct their parents or carers to call the NHS Lothian Vaccination Enquiries Line (0300 790 6296).

- Inpatients

Eligible inpatients should be referred for COVID-19 vaccination when they are assessed as medically fit by their clinical team. The vaccination team will arrange vaccination whilst still an inpatient, if that is at an appropriate time to ensure they are protected for the spring. Colleagues are invited to use the inpatient [referral form](#) and share with the vaccination lead on the relevant site:

Royal Edinburgh Hospital: arthur.thorne@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk
Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh: loth.riecovidclinic@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk
St John's Hospital: loth.sjhcovidclinic@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk
Western General Hospital: pauline.bell@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

- COVID-19 Vaccine Product Choice

As in previous programmes we are unable to offer a choice of COVID-19 vaccine brand based upon patient preference or because of an individual having previously experienced common side effects.

Referrals for specific vaccine products should only be used to accommodate patients who have suffered serious adverse reactions and/or anaphylaxis where it would be clinically unsafe for them to accept the offered vaccine.

Referrals for specific vaccine products received by Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs) will be shared with the NHS Lothian Public Health Immunisation Clinical Enquiries Group for consideration. Feedback to referrers will be shared in cases where the referral cannot be accommodated.

Non-Availability of Non mRNA Alternative Vaccine

There are very few people who cannot have the mRNA vaccines being offered this spring. Non-mRNA vaccines have been available in previous COVID-19 programmes for those who cannot receive mRNA vaccines due to severe allergic reactions.

During the winter programme in 2024/25, the Novavax Nuvaxovid XBB.1.5 vaccine was used. At this time, this was the only product available in the UK market.

Supply of Novavax Nuvaxovid XBB.1.5 is no longer available within the UK market and this means that the NHS in Scotland is currently unable to procure non-mRNA stock for the spring programme

This, unfortunately, means that there is no non-mRNA alternative for those who cannot receive mRNA vaccines due to severe allergic reactions.

The lack of non-mRNA stock applies, not only to the NHS in Scotland, but to the rest of the NHS and to private pharmacies across the UK. The decision not to make stock available at this time sits with the manufacturer.

Nuvaxovid JN.1 vaccine has not yet been approved for use in the UK. NHS Scotland will only use vaccines that have been approved for use by the MHRA (Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency) and meet the required standards of safety and efficacy.

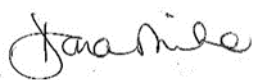
The MHRA must assess all the data and be satisfied that all the necessary trials and checks have been completed before a vaccine can be used.

Spring Vaccination Resources

Information regarding the Spring Vaccination campaign is available on [NHS Inform](#). A set of FAQs are set out in **Annex B**.

Thank you for your continued support if you have any questions or concerns, please contact loth.vaccenquiries@nhs.scot

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dona Milne', written in a cursive style.

Dona Milne
Director of Public Health & Health Policy
NHS Lothian

ANNEX A

Arrangements for COVID-19 Vaccination in NHS Lothian – Spring 2025

Patient Cohort	Vaccination Arrangements	Dates
Aged 6 months to 4 years with a weakened immune system.	The parents and carers of eligible children will be contacted by mail with details of an appointment, or instructions as to how to book.	Clinics commence May 2025.
Prison population.	Vaccination Teams will provide vaccination clinics at HMP Edinburgh and HMP Addiewell.	Clinics commence w/c 14 April 2025
Eligible individuals who are unable to leave their home.	Vaccination Teams will visit eligible individuals in their home. These individuals are asked to wait to be contacted by the domiciliary team.	Home visits will commence early April 2025 and will continue through June 2025.
Eligible individuals who are inpatients.	Hospital Vaccination Teams will provide vaccination to eligible patients on receipt of referral .	Vaccination of inpatients provided from w/c 31 March 2025.
Eligible individuals who are residents in Care Homes.	Vaccination Teams will visit Care Homes to deliver Spring Vaccinations.	Information packs and consent forms despatched March 2025. Care Home visits will commence early April 2025 and will continue through June 2025.
Children aged 5 to 11 with a weakened immune system.	Invitations by letter offering COVID-19 vaccination at HSCP Vaccination Centres.	Invitations despatched Early April 2025. Clinics commence mid-April 2025.
People aged 12 and over with a weakened immune system	Invitations by letter, text or email offering co-administration at HSCP Vaccination Centres.	Invitations despatched late March 2025. Clinics commence w/c 14 April 2025.
Aged 75+	Invitations by letter, text or email offering co-administration at HSCP Vaccination Centres.	Invitations despatched from Late March to Early May Clinics commence w/c 14 April 2025

ANNEX B

Frequently Asked Questions for COVID-19 Vaccination in NHS Lothian – Spring 2025

QUESTION	Who is eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine this spring (2025)?
ANSWER	<p>In spring 2025, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises that a COVID-19 vaccine should be offered to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults aged 75 years and over • Residents in a care home for older adults • Individuals aged 6 months and over who are immunosuppressed

QUESTION	When/how will I be offered a COVID-19 spring vaccine?
ANSWER	Those who are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine this spring will be invited by letter, email or text.

QUESTION	Why am I being offered the vaccine?
ANSWER	<p>Those most at risk of serious infection or having to go to hospital due to COVID-19 infection are being offered a COVID-19 vaccine this spring.</p> <p>The COVID-19 vaccine helps protect against the COVID-19 virus, which can be a serious or life-threatening illness. Getting the vaccine can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help reduce your risk of getting severe symptoms • Help you recover more quickly if you catch COVID-19 • Help reduce your risk of complications or needing treatment in hospital.

QUESTION	Why am I being offered another dose?
ANSWER	<p>Older people and those with a weakened immune system are more at risk of complications from COVID-19 and need extra protection.</p> <p>The vaccine is usually offered in the spring and winter. It's important to keep up to date with the COVID-19 vaccines you are offered as your level of protection reduces over time.</p>

QUESTION	When should I have the vaccine?
ANSWER	NHS Scotland will contact you if eligible, it will usually be offered around 6 months (and no less than 3 months) after your last dose.

QUESTION	Are there any reasons I should not have a COVID-19 vaccine?
ANSWER	There are very few people who cannot have the vaccine. If you've had a confirmed severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to any of the vaccine ingredients or a previous dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, you should seek advice from your health professional before getting vaccinated

QUESTION	Can I still catch COVID-19 after having the vaccine?
ANSWER	You might still get COVID-19, but your symptoms are likely to be milder. The vaccine reduces the chance of you getting seriously ill or dying from COVID-19. It can take a few weeks for your body to build up protection after getting the vaccine. The vaccine cannot give you COVID-19

QUESTION	Which COVID-19 vaccine will I be offered?
ANSWER	You'll be offered the most suitable vaccine for your condition or age. For more information on vaccine ingredients, and links to the patient information leaflets, visit www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine

QUESTION	I'm eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine this spring but I haven't been invited yet?
ANSWER	<p>Before end of May</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NHS Scotland will send you details about your appointment via a letter, text or email when it's your turn. Please wait to be contacted. <p>From June</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You should have received details of your appointment from NHS Scotland either by letter, text or email. If you haven't received this please contact 0800 030 8013.

QUESTION	How do I know if I have an eligible health condition?
ANSWER	<p>People with a weakened immune system may include those who had or have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A blood cancer (such as leukaemia or lymphoma) • A weakened immune system due to a treatment (such as steroid medicine, biological therapy, chemotherapy or radiotherapy) • An organ or bone marrow transplant • A condition that means you have a very high risk of getting infections • A disease which affects your immune system (such as HIV). <p>For a full list of eligible conditions, visit www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine</p>

QUESTION	I'm a carer/live with someone who has a weakened immune system. Am I eligible this spring?
ANSWER	Carers and those that live with someone who has a weakened immune system are not eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine this spring. This is to allow NHS Scotland to prioritise those most at risk.