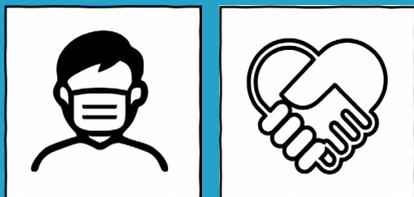


Groundswell

Out of homelessness



COVID-19 in England

Why it still matters and what you need to know

May 2022

ENGLISH VERSION

What is the current situation?

The good news is that many more people now have better immunity to COVID-19 than at the start of the pandemic two years ago.

That immunity is because of:

- the amount of people who have had and survived COVID-19
- the increasing number of people who have taken up the offer of vaccination.

However, the pandemic isn't over yet.

Over the coming years there may be flare ups in infection rates, particularly in winter.

New variants (types of the COVID-19 virus) will continue to develop across the world.

We still need to be careful about keeping ourselves and others as safe as we can from COVID-19, particularly as you can catch it more than once.

How can we all continue to stay safe?

- **Have the vaccine:** all adults who want a vaccination can get one free on the NHS.
- **Open windows:** let fresh air in when you're around others indoors.
- **Wear a face covering** in crowded and enclosed spaces.
- **If you are unwell with any COVID-19 symptoms** try to avoid contact with others, rest and keep hydrated until you feel better. The symptoms are:
 - continuous cough
 - high temperature, fever or chills
 - change in your normal sense of taste or smell
 - shortness of breath
 - unexplained tiredness, lack of energy
 - muscle aches or pains
 - not feeling hungry
 - headache
 - sore throat, stuffy or runny nose
 - diarrhoea, feeling sick or being sick.
- **If you have a health appointment** coming up where you have been asked to attend in person, contact them if you can and let them know about your symptoms.
- **Take a lateral flow test if you feel unwell** or have any of the above symptoms to confirm whether you have COVID-19.
- **Free tests may be available in hostels, day centres and some health settings.** If you have access to a support organisation or support worker, check with them.
- **If you test positive:** try to avoid contact with other people for at least five days as much as is possible. If after five days you still feel unwell, try to continue avoiding contact with others until you feel better.

“ You can talk to anyone available to support you about COVID-19 – that could be accommodation staff, a support worker, mental health worker, nurse, the probation service, etc.”
- Groundswell peer with lived experience

Having the vaccine

This is the best way to protect yourself and others from getting seriously ill or dying from COVID-19, spreading it to others, and catching newer variants.

It stimulates the body's immune system to produce its own protection (antibodies) against the virus.

All adults are entitled to all three vaccine doses.

Having all three gives you the best possible protection.

1. **The first dose** gives you a good level of protection.
2. **The second dose** increases your protection. You can have it two months after your first if you're over 18 (three months after if you're under 18).
3. **The booster** improves the protection you have from your first two doses, and against recent variants of COVID-19. You can have it three months after your second vaccine dose.

If you feel unsure or want to talk through having the vaccine, you can speak to a health professional such as a GP, nurse or pharmacist.

“

If you aren't already registered, and want some advice and support about your health, COVID-19 or the vaccine, you can register with a GP.

Everyone has a right to register, whether or not you have a fixed address or ID, and regardless of your immigration status.” - Groundswell peer

Where you can get vaccinated:

- **At a walk-in site:** find your nearest by searching 'find a covid vaccine site' online.
- **By booking an appointment online:** search 'get a covid vaccine'.
- **A visiting vaccination service** may come to your accommodation or a local service – check with them.

You do not have to be registered with a GP or have your NHS number to hand to have the vaccine.

If you cannot book appointments online, you can call 119 free of charge. You can speak to a translator if you need to.



At Groundswell we believe everyone has a right to good health. Two thirds of our staff and all of our volunteers have experience of homelessness and help put together our health information and guidance, such as this leaflet.

Throughout the pandemic, we've been getting up-to-date information out to people experiencing homelessness, and supporting people to look after their health.

“ **Everyone is entitled to have the vaccine** – it is your right to have it for free, at a time that suits you, anywhere.” - Groundswell peer

Are there side effects?

The COVID-19 vaccine can cause side effects in some people, but not everyone. They include:

- having a sore arm from the injection
- feeling tired
- having a headache
- feeling achy
- feeling sick.

If you have an important appointment coming up, it's a good idea to try and book your vaccine appointment two days before or after it, just in case.

If you're not sure about this, speak to a health professional (such as a GP or a nurse) who will be able to give you more information and guidance.

Do I need it if I've already had COVID-19?

Yes. The antibodies you get after having COVID-19 will decline after a few months. It is also possible to catch COVID-19 more than once.

The COVID-19 vaccine strengthens your immunity and makes it longer lasting. It is safe to have the vaccine if you have had COVID-19.

Will I have to have more doses in future?

No one knows for sure at the moment.

Research has shown that the three vaccine doses we have provide a very good level of protection against COVID-19, variants, and long COVID.

Resources

- Our other free COVID-19 info resources: search 'Groundswell COVID resources'.
- NHS information: search 'NHS COVID-19'.
- The Government's information website: search 'COVID-19 Gov UK'.

If you do not have access to the internet but have access to a support service or support worker, you could ask them to print this information off for you.