

Frequently Asked Questions – Vaccination Second Dose Interval (14 January 2021)

These FAQs have been developed in partnership by Welsh Government officials and Welsh Partnership Forum Business Committee Trade Union colleagues to reassure and support managers and individuals in matters relating to the COVID-19 vaccine.

1 Why was the decision made to increase the time scales of the second dose to approximately 12 weeks?

- The Minister made this decision based on the latest scientific evidence and independent clinical advice which was reviewed by both the JCVI and the 4 UK CMOs who have confirmed that this is safe and effective for both vaccines, and he was confident in the advice received to make this decision. Doing this will enable hundreds of thousands more to get that effective first dose earlier in Wales, due to this UK-wide change of approach on dose interval.
- This will mean many will receive their second dose later than originally expected, but in the interval they will have high levels of protection from their first dose.
- That will result in more frontline health and social care workers and vulnerable older people receiving their first dose – protecting more of our critical NHS staff and reducing admissions, giving greater protection to the NHS and social care services leaving them able to continue providing the first-rate service they provide to us all.
- For further information please watch the video produced by Dr Richard Roberts who provides an overview on the evidence around extending the dose interval between first and second doses of Coronavirus vaccines on the attached website:-

<https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/immunisation-and-vaccines/covid-19-vaccination-information/resources-for-health-and-social-care-professionals/#FAQs>

2 Why is there a difference in opinion on the interval of the 2nd dose?

- There will always be different interpretations of scientific evidence and that is why the JCVI and the 4 UK CMO's work together to review the latest data to reach an agreed position.
- The JCVI and the 4 UK CMO's have had the opportunity to review all of the information available which is not all in the public domain and on reviewing

this data they are confident that the move for the second dose will be effective and is appropriate.

- Many of the objections to a longer dose interval are based on there being a **lack of data** for some vaccines beyond a number of weeks. This is different to there being data showing a **lack of protection**. However, the JCVI has looked at data on longer intervals from several different vaccines, and with their expert understanding of how vaccines work, advise that an interval of up to 12 weeks is acceptable, and may even enhance levels of longer term protection after the second dose.

3 How effective is just one dose compared with two doses of either vaccine?

- Short term vaccine efficacy against COVID-19 illness from the first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is calculated at around 90%. Short term vaccine efficacy from the first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine is calculated at around 70%.
- Efficacy after the second dose is 95% for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and is also around 70% for the AstraZeneca vaccine. Both vaccines appear to offer high levels of protection against serious disease, such as hospitalisation and death.
- There is also evidence that the AstraZeneca vaccine is more effective with a longer interval of up to 12 weeks between doses.
- Even though the first dose is proven to be highly effective, it is important to have the second dose for longer-term protection and there is absolutely no suggestion that this won't happen.

4 Can I opt for a specific vaccination and decline the other?

- As vaccines are being delivered in a phased approach to ensure the most at-risk populations receive them first, it's unlikely you'll be able to choose which you receive as it will be down to availability.

5 I have had the first vaccine what happens now to the date for the second dose, including if my appointment has been rescheduled?

- There is no need for you to contact anyone, you will be issued with an appointment for your second dose within the 12 week period in due course, including if your original appointment for your second dose has been rescheduled.

6 Can I be assured there will be further Pfizer second dose within the 12 week timescale?

- Everyone will still receive their second dose and this will be within 12 weeks of their first. Those who have had their first vaccination can be reassured they will have a good level of protection. The data indicate that from three weeks after the first dose both vaccines provide a high level of protection from Covid-19, in the short term until the second dose. For both vaccines the second dose completes the course and is important for longer term protection. The JCVI's clinical risk prioritisation for the vaccine remains unchanged and applies to both vaccines.
- Health Board plans will build in the requirement to ensure that those who have received a first dose of Pfizer will also receive a second dose of Pfizer.

7 Is there a plan to increase the capacity within the vaccination programme and when do we hope to see 60% of the Welsh population protected?

- The published vaccine plan (<https://gov.wales/covid-19-vaccination-strategy>) sets out the key milestones we are working to here in Wales and how delivery of the vaccine will increase. Health Boards will be producing individual vaccination plans in the days following the publication of the national plan.
- In many ways these milestones will be ambitions. Because delivery against them will be determined by factors that are not entirely within our control. Key to this is vaccine supply.
- We have had assurances from the UK Government that supply can be relied upon. But it is not within the Welsh Government's control.
- The plan will also lay out some of the key assumptions on which our deployment plan is based. These have featured in our planning with health boards for a number of months now. But we will publish these so that the Welsh public is better able to understand the principles underpinning the process being followed.

8 What are the priority groups for the vaccine?

| Priority | Number of people | Risk Group |
|----------|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | 40250 | Residents in a care home for older adults Staff working in care homes for older adults |
| 2 | 326000 | Front-line health care workers Front-line social care workers 80 years and over |
| 3 | 126800 | 75 years and over |
| 4 | 247300 | 70 years and over Clinically extremely vulnerable individuals 16 – 69 years old |
| 5 | 167150 | 65 years and older * |
| 6 | 321400 | Adults in an at risk group age 16-64 years |
| 7 | 125900 | 60 years and older * |
| 8 | 150600 | 55 years and older * |
| 9 | 162850 | 50 years and older * |
| | 1098100 | 16 – 49 years * |

*Individuals without a risk condition

Source: Welsh Government, Individuals in group 1 and 2 may be double counted.

9 When will I receive notification of receiving the vaccination?

- Over the next couple of weeks every resident of Wales should receive a letter from their Local Health Board indicating when they expect to deliver the vaccine in line with the JVCI list of priority. This of course will be subject to the supply of the vaccine.