Latest information on the COVID-19 vaccine in Ireland

The body’s natural defence against disease is called its immune system. A vaccine’s job is to train the body’s immune system to recognise and defend itself against a specific disease. Vaccines help our bodies develop immunity to a virus without us having to get the illness.

A number of possible COVID-19 vaccines are now in the final stages of research and testing in the EU. We expect that the European Commission will approve at least some of these vaccines early in 2021. Once the vaccines are approved, COVID-19 vaccination programmes will begin.

Having a safe and effective vaccine will be a major step forward in limiting the impact of COVID-19 on our lives and economy. When a national vaccination programme begins in Ireland, it will be important to continue to follow the public health advice while the vaccine programme is running, in order to protect against the spread of COVID-19.

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Image: Getting vaccinated

Getting vaccinated

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Image: Vaccine availability

Vaccine availability

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Image: Why vaccines are essential to stop the spread of COVID-19

Why vaccines are essential to stop the spread of COVID-19

We will all need to continue to practise the important public health measures that we’ve been following during the pandemic:

• regular hand washing
• cover coughs and sneezes
• keep a 2-metre distance from other people
• keep social contacts with other people outside our household to a minimum
• know the symptoms of COVID-19 and stay at home and contact your GP to arrange a test if you think you have symptoms
• wear a face covering in shops and in busy indoor workplaces, on public transport and in crowded outdoor spaces

These are our most effective tools to limit the spread of this highly infectious virus. Getting the COVID-19 vaccine will be an important addition to the public health measures to protect ourselves from the spread of COVID-19.

Planning for the COVID-19 vaccine in Ireland

The Irish Government recently established the High-Level Task Force on COVID-19 Vaccination. This group is led by the Department of the Taoiseach and will develop a national vaccination plan for the COVID-19 vaccine in Ireland. The Taskforce is working with the HSE and the Department of Health to prepare for the national COVID-19 vaccination programme.

The COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation Strategy lists the groups of people who will be the first to access a COVID-19 vaccine in Ireland, once a safe and effective vaccine(s) has been authorised. These priority groups include people over the age of 65 living in long-term care facilities, frontline healthcare workers and people aged 70 and over. The Strategy has been developed by the National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) and the Department of Health, has been endorsed by the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHET), and approved by Government on 8 December 2020.

The COVID-19 vaccine will be available free of charge to everyone in Ireland.