**GOOD NEWS! OUR COVID-19 VACCINATIONS ARE AHEAD OF TARGET!**

We are pleased to update that our COVID-19 vaccinations are running ahead of target.  We have now vaccinated the Government’s initial target populations ahead of schedule.  If you are aged 70 and over or are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (i.e. have been advised to shield) and are registered with Grove Medical Practice, The Spinney Surgery, Riverport Medical Practice or Moat House Surgery but have not yet received your vaccination yet, please telephone 07591 298318 to arrange your appointment.

Our vaccination clinics are held at the **Old Exchange Surgery Vaccination Site**, East Street, St Ives. Patients will be invited to attend a clinic.  There is no parking at the vaccination site but we have arranged free parking at the following location for any patients attending their vaccination appointments on the day of the clinics:

* Globe Place Car Park – PE27 5PP
* There is no need to purchase a ticket, just leave a note in your windscreen to say that you are visiting the COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic

Clinics are running on a regular basis and appointments are released as soon as we are notified of our next vaccine delivery.  We will shortly be starting to invite patients who are aged 16 to 65 and in an at-risk group.  Invitations are sent in batches, so please don’t worry, you will not be missed and we will be contacting you as soon as we can to arrange your appointment.  We also have a team who are telephoning patients directly to book these appointments.

When you attend your vaccination appointment please wear a face mask and continue to follow the social distancing guidance. These steps help to save lives

**What to expect when you arrive for your vaccination appointment**

When you are invited to your vaccination appointment there are a few things we need you to do to help ensure everything runs smoothly.

* Please arrive close to your appointment time - there is no need to arrive early as appointments are carefully spaced
* Please use the car park available (see above).  Very limited drop off and collection will be available for those who really need it
* Please wrap up warm but wear clothing that you can easily remove your upper arm for your vaccination
* Please wear a face mask and maintain social distance
* Please follow the marshalls who will be on hand to direct and support you
* Please do not attend if you are self-isolating because you have been contacted by Track & Trace or if you have any signs or symptoms of COVID-19
* After your vaccination, we will need you to remain on site for 15 minutes (Pfizer vaccination only).

**Thank you for all the support**

Delivering the COVID-19 vaccination clinics is a team effort and we would like to take this opportunity to thank everybody involved, our fantastic volunteers and the local organisations who have supported us.  Special thanks go to:

* All of the teams and staff at our local GP practices (Grove Medical Practice, Spinney Surgery, Riverport Medical Practice and Moat House Surgery)
* All of our incredible volunteers and the Rotary Club of St Ives
* Our local Patient Groups
* All of our colleagues within the wider NHS including NHSE England, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group, the Community Nursing Team and Pharmacist support.
* The medical team at RAF Wyton
* West Cambs GP Federation
* Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council
* Cambridgeshire Police
* Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service
* All Undercover Ltd
* DALROD
* Shopmobility Huntingdon
* St Ives Corn Exchange
* Steve Eagell Toyota, Giggs & McGrath, Move with Us and St Ives Tackle
* Tesco, Waitrose, the local foodbank, Rheola Care Home and everybody who has baked us cakes, donated food and dropped off teas and coffees

**Some Frequently Asked Questions**

**Why did you choose the Old Exchange site in St Ives for vaccinations?**

The St Ives Primary Care Network, which includes Grove Medical Practice, Moat House Surgery, Riverport Medical Practice and The Spinney Partnership,  collaboratively identified the Old Exchange Surgery as the site to deliver vaccinations to their patients. This site is in a central location in St Ives, has good public transport links and is close to a large car park.  As part of this process, the site was inspected and approved by the NHS team who commissioned the vaccination service.

**Why did you not use a larger non-NHS location?**

The Old Exchange Surgery site is in a central location in St Ives, has good public transport links and is close to a large car park. It’s anticipated that we’ll need to give vaccinations from this site for many months and we therefore we need to ensure we can use the site as a when we need it.

This GP surgery is well-equipped to run the vaccinations clinics; there multiple consulting rooms, a large outside space which we have covered with marquees, as well as the IT equipment installed and ready to use.

**What’s been done at the Old Exchange to make it suitable as a vaccination site?**

We’ve made many changes to the Old Exchange site, these include:

* Installing marquees with heaters outside
* Doubling the space of the waiting room by making an additional waiting room in a heated marquee
* Providing heaters in the marquees
* Floor markings inside to help keep patients 2m apart
* A team of dedicated volunteers to help patients
* Chairs for anyone frail or elderly to sit on while they wait
* Wheelchairs to help anyone who needs them
* Umbrellas to help when its raining

**Some Questions about the vaccination**

**Can I get Coronavirus from the vaccine?**

You cannot catch COVID-19 from the vaccine, but it is possible to have caught COVID-19 and not realise you have the symptoms until after your vaccination appointment.

The most important symptoms of COVID-19 are recent onset of any of the following:

* a new continuous cough
* a high temperature
* a loss of, or change in your normal sense of taste or smell

If you have the symptoms above, stay at home and [arrange to have a test](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test).

If you need more information on symptoms visit <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>

**I have had the flu vaccine, do I need the COVID-19 vaccine as well?**

The flu vaccine does not protect you from COVID-19. If you are eligible for both vaccines you should have them both.

**How do the vaccines work?**

The vaccines work by making a protein from the virus that is important for creating protection.  The protein works in the same way they do for other vaccines by stimulating the immune system to make antibodies and cells to fight the infection.

**Will the vaccine protect me?**

The COVID-19 vaccination will reduce the chance of you suffering from COVID-19 disease. It may take a few weeks for your body to build up protection from the vaccine.  The vaccine has been shown to be effective and no safety concerns were seen in studies of more than 20,000 people.  Like all medicines, no vaccine is completely effective – some people may still get COVID-19 despite having a vaccination, but this should be less severe.

**Can I have the vaccine if I’m immunocompromised?**

There may be a very small number of people with very complex or severe immunological problems who can’t make any response at all to the vaccine – but the vaccine should not do any harm to these individuals. Individuals meeting these criteria may want to discuss the vaccine further with their specialist doctor.

**We are now in lockdown - will vaccines still be provided/should I still attend my appointment?**

Yes. Getting the COVID-19 vaccine, or any other vaccine, is an important medical appointment and permitted as a reason to leave your house during lockdown. Vaccinations will continue as normal. If you have booked or are offered an appointment, please attend it. The place that you choose to have your vaccine will keep you safe from COVID-19 through a range of measures including cleaning and disinfecting and having social distancing in waiting areas. Please also wear a face covering to your appointment. You should also take the usual steps to minimise your risk as you travel to your appointment.

**I’ve received a letter to book an appointment at the Vaccination Centre, do I have to book there or can I go to my local GP practice?**

If you have received a letter in the post from the national booking centre you can book your appointment using the details in the letter. It is important that you take the first opportunity to get your COVID-19 vaccination to ensure that you are protected. People aged 70 and over can now arrange a vaccination through the national booking service which can be accessed at [www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination](http://www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination). The system allows patients to choose a time slot and location that suits them. Anyone unable to book online can call 119 free of charge, anytime between 7am and 11pm seven days a week. If a suitable and convenient slot is not available at the vaccination centre people can also call their GP practice.

**Can I pick what vaccine I want?**

Any vaccines that the NHS will provide will have been approved because they pass the MHRA’s tests on safety and efficacy, so people should be assured that whatever vaccine they get, it is worth their while.

**Is one better than the other?**

The important point for any vaccine is whether the MHRA approves it for use – if it does then that means it’s a worthwhile vaccine to have and people should have it if they are eligible. Data from clinical trials does suggest the Pfizer vaccine offers marginally more protection, but both are classed as highly effective.

**Can I get a COVID-19 vaccine privately?**

No. Vaccinations will only be available through the NHS for the moment. Anyone who claims to be able to provide you with a vaccine for a fee is likely to be committing a crime and should be reported to the Police 101 service and/or Local Trading Standards.

**Will the vaccine work with the new strain?**

We are continuing to vaccinate people as normal. Scientists are looking now in detail at the characteristics of the virus in relation to the vaccine. Viruses, such as the winter flu virus, often branch into different strains but these small variations rarely render vaccines ineffective.

**Why are you postponing second doses?**

The [UK Chief Medical Officers have agreed](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-from-the-uk-chief-medical-officers-on-the-prioritisation-of-first-doses-of-covid-19-vaccines) a longer timeframe between first and second doses so that more people can get their first dose quickly, and because the evidence shows that one dose still offers a high level of protection. This decision will allow us to get the maximum benefit for the most people in the shortest possible time and will help save lives. Getting both doses remains important so we would urge people to return for it at the right time.

**I am in one of the priority groups. Why do I have to wait?**

The NHS are vaccinating the most at-risk groups, including over 70s, health and social care staff and people who are extremely clinically vulnerable.

If you are aged over 70 and have not yet had your vaccine, you can book an appointment at a large vaccination site online or on the phone. The easiest way to arrange a vaccination is through the national booking service which can be accessed at [www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination](http://www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination). The system allows patients to choose a time slot and location that suits them. Anyone unable to book online can call 119 free of charge, anytime between 7am and 11pm seven days a week. If a suitable and convenient slot is not available people can also call their GP practice. If you are not in one of the priority groups, please wait until you are contacted. This will help the NHS to make sure we protect those most at risk first.

**Does the vaccination contain animal products?**

Neither vaccination includes ingredients of animal origin. All ingredients are published in healthcare information on the MHRA’s website.

**Can I have the vaccination if I have had allergic reactions to other things before?**

Anyone with a previous history of allergic reactions to the ingredients of the vaccine should not receive it, but those with any other allergies such as a food allergy can now have the vaccine.

**Can I have the vaccine if I am pregnant/ hoping to fall pregnant soon/ breastfeeding?**

The MHRA have updated their guidance to say that pregnant women and those who are breastfeeding can have the vaccine but should discuss it with a clinician to ensure that the benefits outweigh any potential risks.

**Why do I have to travel to a different GP practice for my vaccine?**

Your GP practice is part of a group of local GP practices looking after the healthcare of patients in the local area. The vaccinations will be delivered to one GP practice which will act as a hub to give the vaccinations to a range of local people, not just those registered as patients at this practice. By using one location it means we can use all our skilled staff in one location to provide the vaccination clinics. We have also chosen locations that mean that patients can safely receive their vaccination. You should make all possible efforts to get the vaccination as soon as it is offered to you, however, if you cannot travel to this location for your vaccine then you will not miss your opportunity for a vaccine and will be offered one at a later date.

**I need help to get to my appointment – can you help?**

We would ask that you consider contacting a friend or relative who may be able to drive you to the appointment if you think they may be able to help in the first instance, as our volunteer driver team will have limited capacity. If you do need help from the Local Authority’s voluntary travel support service, you can access this service online via <http://bit.ly/transportsupport>. You can also call them between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday on 0345 045 5219 to book your transport.

**Can I bring someone to support me at my appointment?**

We are asking patients to come to their appointment on their own unless they are in a wheelchair, but friends or relatives are more than welcome to wait in the car park if they have driven together. We would recommend only travelling or asking for support from someone within your household or support bubble in line with current COVID-19 guidance. If you need assistance from a carer or relative to walk to and through the vaccination centre, they are also welcome to accompany you wearing a face covering.

**Will you pay for my transport?**

Sorry, but we cannot cover any transportation costs.

**Is the vaccine safe?**

Yes. The NHS will not offer any Covid-19 vaccinations to the public until independent experts have signed off that it is safe to do so.   The MHRA, the official UK regulator, have said that both of these vaccines have good safety profiles and offer a high level of protection, and we have full confidence in their expert judgement and processes.   As with any medicine, vaccines are highly regulated products.  There are checks at every stage in the development and manufacturing process, and continued monitoring once it has been authorised and is being used in the wider population.

**If I say no to this appointment, when can I get another slot?**

We can look for other dates on the phone now, or further appointments will be available in the coming weeks.

**Do I have to wear PPE/ face mask?**

You should wear a face covering when you attend your vaccination appointment. Staff on site will also be wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). Please remember to use hand sanitiser provided on site. If you are unable to wear a face mask, we would ask you to bring and wear a face visor instead.

**I’m housebound – can you come to me instead?**

Local GP practices are working alongside our GPs and community health providers to deliver vaccinations to those patients who are housebound or unable to attend a practice or vaccination site.  Housebound patients in the priority cohorts are being contacted direct to book a home appointment. If you are over 70 or extremely clinically vulnerable (previously shielding) and have not yet been contacted, then contact your GP practice to make an appointment.

**Can you book my husband/ wife/partner in now too?**

Not at this moment in time, unless they are in one of the eligible cohorts and also registered at this Practice. When it is the right time people will receive an invitation to come forward. For most people this will be in the form of a letter either from their GP or the national booking system; this will include all the information they need, including their NHS number. We know lots of people will be eager to get protected but we are asking people who are not in one of the top 4 priority cohorts not to contact the NHS to get an appointment until they get their letter or are contacted.

**Can you book my carer in?**

Not at this moment in time, unless they are in one of the eligible cohorts and also registered at this Practice. When it is the right time people will receive an invitation to come forward. For most people this will be in the form of a letter either from their GP or the national booking system; this will include all the information they need, including their NHS number. We know lots of people will be eager to get protected but we are asking people who are not in the top 4 priority cohorts not to contact the NHS to get an appointment until they get their letter or are contacted.

**Who will give me the vaccine?**

An appropriately trained member of NHS staff will deliver your vaccination. Each member of staff has received specific COVID-19 vaccination training in advance of delivering the vaccines.

**How will the vaccine be administered?**

COVID-19 vaccines are administered with an injection needle into the upper arm.  To ensure as many people are vaccinated as quickly as possible, the Department for Health and Social Care now advise that the second dose of both the OxfordAstraZeneca and the Pfizer/BioNtech vaccine should be scheduled up to 12 weeks apart.

**What happens afterwards, do I have to sit and wait?**

You will be given important information on how to look after yourself after the vaccination has taken place. While a member of staff is sharing this information with you, they will pay attention to how you are feeling to ensure that you are not experiencing any immediate reaction from the vaccine.

We ask that you wait for 15 minutes in the vaccination hub area before leaving.

**What happens if I do not feel well on the day of my vaccine?**

You do not have to cancel or postpone your vaccine if you are suffering with a minor illness, such as a cold. If you are feeling very unwell, the vaccine may be postponed. If you have any symptoms of COVID-19, including a persistent cough, high temperature and/ or loss of taste of smell please contact us to rearrange your appointment and visit <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test> to book a test.

**Will a translator or BSL interpreter be available?**

I’m afraid we will not have translators or BSL interpreters available for these first appointments. Further appointments will be available at other locations soon, which may be able to offer further support.

**What do I have to bring to my vaccination appointment?**

We are asking people to bring their own face covering, mask or visor to the vaccination appointment, and to wear it when they are inside the building.

**What side effects can I expect?**

These are important details which the MHRA always consider when assessing candidate vaccines for use.  For these vaccines, like lots of others, they have identified that some people might feel slightly unwell, but they report that no significant side effects have been observed in the tens of thousands of people involved in trials.  All patients will be provided with information on the vaccine they have received, how to look out for any side effects, and what to do if they do occur, including reporting them to the MHRA.

**What happens if I feel unwell after the vaccine?**

Symptoms following vaccination normally last less than a week. If your symptoms seem to get worse or if you are concerned, call NHS 111.

If you do seek advice from a doctor or nurse, make sure you tell them about your vaccination (show them the vaccination card if possible) so that they can assess you properly. You can also report suspected side effects to vaccines and medicines through the Yellow Card scheme. You can do this via <https://coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/>.

**When will I receive the appointment for the second dose?**

We will contact you to book your second dose. Your second dose should be given between 3 to 12 weeks after your first dose. It is important to have both doses of the same vaccine to give you the best protection.

**Once I’m vaccinated, can I see my grandchildren/my children like I would have before the pandemic?**

The vaccine cannot give you COVID-19 infection, and two doses will reduce your chance of becoming seriously ill.  We do not yet know whether it will stop you from catching and passing on the virus. So, it is important to follow the guidance in your local area to protect those around you. To protect yourself and your family, friends and colleagues you still need to:

• practise social distancing

• wear a face mask

• wash your hands carefully and frequently

• follow the current guidance – you can find this via [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

**Will I be completely immune after getting the vaccine?**

The COVID-19 vaccination will reduce the chance of you suffering from COVID-19 disease. It may take a few weeks for your body to build up protection from the vaccine. Like all medicines, no vaccine is completely effective – some people may still get COVID-19 despite having a vaccination, but this should be less severe.

**I’ve already been part of the vaccine trial process – do I need another vaccination?**

If you are already part of a vaccine trial, please contact the study team by calling them on the number you have been provided with as part of the trial.

**I have been invited to book my covid vaccination through an accurx.thirdparty.nhs.uk link, is it legitimate?**

accuRx is a software provider that GP surgeries are using to send out invites to patients. Please [review this information from accuRx](https://support.accurx.com/en/articles/4794856-i-have-been-invited-to-book-my-covid-19-vaccination-through-accurx-thirdparty-nhs-uk-is-this-legitimate) .

**Why has my neighbour had their COVID-19 vaccination before me?**

We have not forgotten you. Each practice in the neighbourhood has a defined number of slots in each clinic available to them to book their patients into. There are many more patients than slots available in each clinic, therefore it will take several clinics to get through each eligible cohort.

Remember the covid vaccination programme is not like the flu vaccination programme, it is on a much larger scale, and will run for 8-9 months minimum, not just over a few weeks like the flu programme, so everyone eligible will eventually get their turn.

**How are you choosing which people to contact?**

The single greatest risk factor for Covid-19 is increasing age, and this risk rises exponentially (more and more rapidly) with age. The optimal strategy for minimising future deaths is to offer vaccination to older age groups first.

Please check the [priority list](https://www.ivygrove.org.uk/covid-vacc.html#news) above for the eligible cohorts.

**Why can't I have the jab now and just get back to normal?**

Please see above. **We cannot shortcut the national process for the eligible cohorts to call any patient in earlier** and you cannot buy the jab privately.

Although we definitely want to see as many people vaccinated as possible, and we all know the whole country wants to get back to normal as soon as possible, the COVID-19 vaccination programme is a marathon, not a sprint. Even if you have the jab now, it does not mean that you or your family can abandon all the ongoing measures to keep yourselves safe. You must still socially distance, adhere to strict hygiene and follow all rules on local and national restrictions.

Please be aware that everyone is working extremely hard behind the scenes to get this programme up and running as quickly, effectively and efficiently as possible, so even if you do not hear straight away, you can be assured that strenuous efforts are underway and you will get your turn.

The quickest way to get the vaccination is to wait your turn and accept and attend any appointment for the jab that you will be offered.

**What if I am a frontline health or social care worker?**

If you work for an NHS trust, or hospital, then your human resources or occupational health department will arrange for you to get the COVID-19 vaccination.

If you work in a care home, you should be able to get your COVID-19 vaccination when the residents in your workplace get theirs.

For all other health and social care workers, please wait to be contacted by your employing organisation in due course.

The latest guidance indicates that by mid-January, all NHS Trusts should have been established as 'hospital hubs' and the default provider of COVID-19 vaccinations for **all** healthcare and social care workers.

**What if I am an informal carer?**

If you are an adult who provides regular care for an elderly or disabled person then you will be in group 6.