

COVID 19 VACCINATION INFORMATION

Be aware that information on COVID-19 and vaccines is changing daily. Your own GP can give you up to date advice on whether a vaccine is right for you based on your personal health circumstances. This information has been published on 07/12/2020 please ensure you are following our most up to date information. The purpose of this publication is for information only. The British Polio Fellowship disclaims all liability for any claims, losses, damages, costs and expenses incurred as a result of reliance on this information. It is not a substitute for advice from your doctor, physiotherapist or other health care professional

Pfizer vaccine roll out and polio

The trials to date have reported very few safety issues and no evidence to suggest that people who have had polio or have PPS should not take the COVID 19 vaccine if offered. Most people in the UK who had polio are over 65 and are at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19, so the clinical experts advising the BPF believe that they should have the vaccine unless advised otherwise by their health care professional.

The NHS expect to offer the Pfizer vaccine first to people who live in care homes and care home workers, to people over 80 yrs, and to health and social care workers.

Younger women should be aware that there is no safety data as yet for those who are pregnant or breastfeeding or planning a pregnancy within three months of the first dose and they are advised not to come forward for vaccination until at least 2 months after the vaccine. If they have received the first dose inadvertently while pregnant, the 2nd dose should be given after pregnancy.

Does having had polio or the polio vaccine give immunity?

You may have heard reports suggesting that having had polio gives immunity to COVID-19 - this is not backed by any clinical evidence.

You may have also heard reports that the polio vaccine gives immunity - again, this has no clinical backing. (In fact, most people in the UK are given the polio vaccine , so if the polio vaccine did give immunity - there would have been no COVID 19 epidemic in the UK). What has been discussed is that receiving live vaccines might possibly give protection against other diseases, but this has not been proven. The World Health Organisation does not recommend the live oral polio vaccine (OPV) for the prevention of COVID-19.

Will I be given priority because I had polio?

Polio/PPS is not specifically on the list of conditions that is considered to make people clinically extremely vulnerable to COVID-19 and the BPF will continue to advocate for this to happen. However, members may be offered the Pfizer virus sooner as they may fall in the priority vaccine list , such as is they live in a care home or are over 80yrs.

Some people who had polio will have significant respiratory (breathing) problems or other health conditions not related to polio which may make them clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable. For advice on your individual suitability for or benefit from the vaccine, you should consult your GP or pharmacist ensuring they understand your polio and other medical history. They will be able to take into account your personal health risk and will have the latest information on the vaccine.

Do we still need to take precautions?

The government advice still is in place to take precautions around 'Hands, Face, Space'. Even after the vaccine is rolled out, it will take time for an immune response to build up and for the NHS to determine how long the protection lasts. Everyone should continue to practice due care and everyone must continue to follow whatever measures are in places locally (such as the Tier system).

Sources: NHS, Joint Committee for Vaccine and Immunisation, the UK government website for information on priority groups and the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine information - accessed 4/12/2020

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