



HM Prison &
Probation Service

Female COVID Vaccinations

[March 2021]

We know from evidence contacted into vaccines, and specifically COVID vaccines, that women may be less likely to have a vaccination.

We have also gained insight that suggests that trusted authority figures and peer to peer support may help encourage uptake.

In order to help people in your prisons have these conversations, the national communications team have worked with the NHS and governors from across the female estate to create some bespoke lines.

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Female Vaccinations

Women in Prison

The COVID vaccine should give you good protection against coronavirus and reduce your chances of getting very ill. Having the vaccine is one of the most important actions you can take to help bring us out from the other side of this pandemic, alongside testing, social distancing, washing your hands and covering your face where you need to.

Having the vaccine will help you to keep everyone safe, including those living and working in your prison and your family and friends.

The vaccines are safe. All vaccines used in the UK have to meet a strict standard of safety. There have been lots of trials and safety checks which had to happen before the vaccine could be approved for use.

There is no evidence that it is unsafe for pregnant women, but scientists want to get more evidence before it is routinely offered to those who are pregnant. You may be able to have the vaccine if you are pregnant and have health conditions that mean you are at high risk of serious complications from coronavirus. You can speak to healthcare about this if it applies to you.

The vaccine has not been tested on breastfeeding women but experts such as the World Health Organisation say that you can have the vaccine while you are breastfeeding. You might decide to wait until you have finished breastfeeding and then have the vaccine. It is safe for you to get pregnant after having the vaccine.

You can also have the vaccination even if you are only serving a short sentence. You can have your first dose in prison and then we will help you to register with a doctor in the area you are moving to as part of your release plan. This will allow you to have your second dose of the vaccine in the community once you are released. If you are moving to an Approved Premise, you will be signed up to a doctor as part of your introduction when you arrive.

You do not have to have the vaccination, but it will help to protect you from potentially getting very unwell if you get coronavirus and may even save your life.

If you decide you do not want the vaccination now, you can change your mind later.

You may find it helpful to speak to a XXX to understand more about the vaccine. There are also leaflets we can share with you.

Vaccinations COVID 19

Q&A – women specific/adapt based on insight for female audience

1. Is it safe for people who are pregnant?

There is no evidence that it is unsafe if you are pregnant, but the scientists want to get more evidence before it is routinely offered to those who are pregnant. You may be able to have the vaccine if you are pregnant and have health conditions that mean you are at high risk of serious complications from coronavirus. You can speak to healthcare about this if it applies to you.

2. Is it safe for people who are breast feeding?

You can have the vaccination if you are breastfeeding.

3. Will it impact on me if I want to get pregnant after the vaccine?

It is safe for you to get pregnant after having the vaccine.

4. How will it help other people in the prison if I have the vaccine?

The vaccine should give you good protection against coronavirus and reduce your chances of getting very ill, but you may still be able to get or spread the virus. That's why we need to continue with an adapted regime and social distancing while there are still lots of cases in prison and the community.

You should stay more than two metres away from other people where you can and make sure you wear a face covering when you are advised to. Wash your hands regularly and always sneeze or cough into a tissue and then throw it away. Try to avoid touching your face as well. These will help prevent the spread of lots of nasty illnesses as well as coronavirus.

5. What if I am released before I have had the second vaccination?

As part of your release plans, you will be supported in registering for a doctor in the area you are moving to. They will give you your second vaccination.

If you are moving to an Approved Premises, you will be signed up to a doctor as part of your introduction when you arrive.

6. I don't want to be vaccinated; can I refuse?

You do not have to have the vaccination, but it will help to protect you from potentially getting very unwell if you get coronavirus. It may save your life. You may also find it helps other people to feel confident enough to get vaccinated if you have had yours.

If you decide you do not want the vaccination now, you can change your mind later.

You may find it helpful to speak to a member of healthcare staff to understand more about the vaccine. There are also leaflets we can share with you.

7. I have been shielding, can I stop shielding after I get the vaccine?

The vaccine should give you good protection against coronavirus and reduce your chances of getting very ill, but you may still be able to get or spread the virus. We would advise you to continue shielding and you can speak to healthcare staff or prison staff about shielding.

We know that it can be very hard to spend so much time on your own and there are things we can do to support you if you decide to carry on shielding.

8. Is it suitable for me if I am a practicing Muslim?

The British Islamic Medical Association has said that the Pfizer vaccine and the AstraZeneca vaccine are suitable if you are a Muslim. Muslim experts in infections, from a variety of denominations, were consulted about this.

9. Are there any other faith-based reasons to consider when having the vaccine?

Most faiths or beliefs have considered the vaccination and made a statement on it. Please ask to speak to your faith advisor for more information or there are leaflets you can ask for.

10. Do the vaccines contain any animal products?

No, but all vaccines must be tested on animals because this is a regulatory requirement for any vaccines released in the UK.

11. Does the COVID-19 vaccine contain blood products?

None of the vaccines produced by AstraZeneca, Moderna, and Pfizer/BioNTech contain blood products.

12. Do any of these vaccines use human tissue (e.g. foetal cells) in their development?

Different COVID-19 vaccines were made in different ways, using different technology.

To develop the AstraZeneca vaccine a cell line was used that originally came from a female foetus aborted in the 1970s. None of those original cells are actually in the vaccine you get though.

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines were created using a different type of technology that doesn't use cell lines.