



T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Presiding Officer
All MSP's
SPICe

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Jeane Freeman

Further to my letter of 31 December, you may be aware that the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) have issued some additional advice on dose interval for both the Oxford AstraZeneca and the Pfizer BioNTech vaccines. As I alluded to in my letter we have therefore sought to operationalise this, but I thought you would find it helpful to have a bit more background on the rationale and thinking behind this approach.

As you are aware the sharp rise in the number of cases in Scotland is further evidence that the new strain is increasing transmission. The JCVI have therefore concluded that it is necessary to rapidly protect the most vulnerable and given that the short term efficacy of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is 90% and 70% from the AstraZeneca vaccine from the first dose, they have recommended a change in the dose schedule. They have concluded that given the high level of protection afforded by the first dose, models suggest that initially vaccinating a greater number of people with a single dose will prevent more deaths and hospitalisations than vaccinating a smaller number of people with two doses. It is important to stress that the second dose is still important as this will provide longer lasting protection and is expected to be as or more effective when delivered at an interval of 12 weeks from the first dose. A copy of the JCVI statement is attached separately for ease (Annex A).

Following the publication of this statement, the four UK Chief Medical Officers met and published a joint letter setting out the position and a copy of this can be found at [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - vaccine: letter from the Chief Medical Officer updating on the vaccination programme - 1 January 2021 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#). We have therefore embedded this into the CMO letter issued to all Health Boards and delivery partners, and whilst it is not in itself unusual for the MHRA or JCVI to offer additional advice, I recognise that this has the potential to create some confusion.

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However, we remain committed to aligning our approach to the latest independent clinical advice and NHS Boards are currently in the process of contacting all individuals who have their second dose arranged for after the 4th January to reschedule their appointment for 12 weeks following their first dose. Whilst we appreciate this may cause some initial concern and confusion, it is important that we highlight the 90% efficacy on receiving a single dose and that in adopting this clinically advised approach we are able to protect a greater number and more quickly of the initial JCVI priority group within care homes, those over 80 years old and health and social care staff.

We are currently in the process of modelling this and I will share this with you as soon as possible, but rescheduling the second dose of the Pfizer vaccine will allow us to vaccinate considerably more vulnerable people earlier than would otherwise have been the case.

I appreciate you may have questions regarding this and my office will arrange a briefing session with me, the CMO and lead delivery officials this afternoon following the parliamentary statement by the First Minister. Details of that session will follow however in the meantime, I have attached some Q&A material that I hope you will find helpful in addressing any queries you may have from your constituents.

Kind regards
Jeane
JEANE FREEMAN

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ANNEX A



JCVI release Dec
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COVID-19 Vaccination Question and Answers

Why has the doses schedule changed?

The independent clinical group that provides all Governments within the UK with advice on vaccinations is the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) and they have recommended that the second vaccination dose for both vaccines should be between 4 and 12 weeks from the first injection. This is in recognition of the very high levels of protection offered from the first dose, and that the increased transmission rate of the new strain of coronavirus poses a significant risk of increased case numbers meaning we need to vaccinate more quickly provide vaccine protection to more people in the JCVI list of vulnerable people.

When will I be invited for my second vaccination?

You will be advised of arrangements for your second vaccination when you visit for your first dose.

How is this safe when the clinical trial didn't test this?

The MHRA and the JCVI looked in detail at all the evidence from the clinical trials undertaken by the pharmaceutical companies, including additional analyses of the data, and concluded that both vaccines offer very high levels of protection from the first dose and although there is slightly more protection offered with the second dose, the wider benefits of offering this to more people persuaded them to recommend this approach. It is entirely safe and will protect more people.

What happens if I miss the second injection?

If you do miss your scheduled second vaccination then please contact the provider where this was scheduled to take place to rearrange as soon as possible. It is important that you return for your second vaccination as this will provide the maximum level of protection possible.

What if I have any questions about the vaccines?

For more information about who'll be offered the coronavirus vaccine and its delivery, phone 0800 030 8013 (available 8.00am to 8.00pm, 7 days a week).

Will I receive the same vaccine for my second dose and I get for my first dose?

Yes. You will receive the same vaccine for your first and second dose based on current advice from the MHRA and the JCVI.

