STAY SAFE
GET A JAB
YOUR UNION WANTS TO KEEP YOU SAFE

This past year has been one like never before. COVID-19 has devastated families and communities but your union, Unite, has been working tirelessly to keep you safe and supported through this health and economic crisis.

Unite members have also served this country heroically, working throughout to care for the sick, keep food on the shelves and make sure key workers get to their workplace safely.

Unite members are also involved in the production, distribution and administration of the life-saving vaccines that are now offering us a bridge to a safer world.

The sacrifices that we have all made and the appalling human loss that the people of this country have endured will be with us for years to come. But in the vaccination programme there is genuine light on the horizon, the real hope that we will soon be able to see our loved ones and go about life, safely, again.

Everyone misses their friends, their family, going out and seeing one another but the way to get back to doing this is to do so safely.
Thanks to great scientific minds, supported by huge amounts of development money and long hours put in by exceptional people, vaccines have been successfully trialled, tested and produced in record time.

A lot of work went into creating a model for such a vaccine many years before the current pandemic. The COVID-19 vaccines are really safe and will protect you and your families and friends. If you do contract the virus your symptoms will be milder and prevent you from becoming very, very ill.

**Millions in the UK have now been vaccinated, safely and successfully.**

Vaccine uptake needs to be high in order to fully protect our communities, to provide a way out of the pandemic.

Your union, Unite, encourages you to have the vaccine when it is offered to you – and we do this because we believe in the products and we believe in protecting you.

**We want to keep you and your families safe.**
**So please, get the jab.**

But if you have any doubts, we hope that this information puts your mind at rest.
HOW WE GOT COVID-19 VACCINES SO QUICKLY

The creation of a vaccine that has the same safety protocols as any other vaccine and that is highly effective at stopping COVID-19 was completed in 10 months. Many Unite members were at the forefront of development, production and administration of the vaccine.

It is a remarkable achievement only possible because of scientific brilliance, supported by huge amounts of development money, alongside dedication and long hours.

Additionally, scientists could move fast as the COVID-19 vaccine is based on previous knowledge and research such as:

• After the Ebola outbreak (2014 – 2016) the response was slow and many died. In the reviews that followed an emergency strategy was created for producing a vaccine very quickly to counter a disease that came out of nowhere.

• Scientists had been working on a blueprint vaccine for such an event for years. They reengineered this blueprint to fight the COVID-19 virus. As a result of the previous SARS coronavirus (2002) and MERS coronavirus (2012) scientists knew how this new coronavirus was likely to behave. They knew that it has a ‘spike protein’, which is what allows the virus to get into our bodies’ cells. They had already developed a vaccine for MERS that enabled our immune systems to attack the ‘spike’ which informed the vaccine for COVID-19.

• The genetic code of COVID-19 was identified early in the pandemic. Combining this code with their own knowledge, global scientists were able to ‘instruct’ the blueprint vaccine to fight the COVID-19 ‘spike protein’.

Together this enabled scientists to design, manufacture and produce a vaccine for COVID-19 very quickly.
The UK independent vaccine regulator, the MHRA, can only approve a vaccine after rigorous safety checks of the development and production processes, including a number of trial stages. The COVID-19 vaccine went through every trial stage in line with the emergency strategy (developed after the Ebola outbreak) for producing a vaccine quickly without cutting corners. This was achieved as:

- A huge number of volunteers registered interest online within hours of media and social media call outs for trial participants.
- There was no process delay between each trial phase to enable scientists to write reports and secure additional funding.
- Everyone prioritised the process and kept it moving swiftly. This was possible as vast funds were released, extra staff employed, additional vaccine trial locations set-up, electronic data collection implemented, and oversight committees prioritised their reviews.
- The vaccine regulator conducted rolling safety reviews, speeding up the process.

*By working together, timelines could be shortened without cutting corners or compromising safety.*
Vaccines are designed to prevent disease. When you receive your first dose of the vaccine your body responds and kicks starts the natural production of antibodies that build immunity to the virus.

The first dose of the vaccine does give some good protection and getting the second dose gives your immune system a boost to overcome the vaccine.

After you have received the vaccine injection you will still be vulnerable for a few weeks until the vaccine kicks in and your body has manufactured more antibodies. This is why calls to be careful even after having the vaccine, particularly between the two vaccine shots, are made.

At present it is not known to what extent vaccination will prevent transmission, therefore as a precaution and to protect others who have yet to receive the vaccine social distancing, regularly washing hands and wearing face coverings will still be important.
**COMMON SIDE EFFECTS**

The very common side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine include a headache, sore arm, chills and muscle pain. These are signs of the immune system ramping up and, according to the NHS can be treated with everyday painkillers. For more information: www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/

As is standard for all pharmaceutical products, the regulators continue to monitor the safety of licensed vaccines on a daily basis.

**VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES**

Significant efforts are being made to reach vulnerable communities where take up of the vaccine is lower than hoped.

COVID-19 has preyed heavily on the poor, isolated and vulnerable. But these are also the communities where vaccine take up needs to increase.

Unite members can help reach these communities, spreading the word that the vaccine is the best way to provide protection from this dreadful disease.
**EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VACCINE**

Vaccination can help protect you and your families but it also means that those who catch the virus have a milder illness. This protects those that are most vulnerable and reduces the strain on our NHS.

Laura. NHS worker. Unite the union rep, recovering from Covid-19

"It is very important that you listen to the facts, not what people say on social media.

We want to work in a safe workplace and the only way you can do that at this moment in time is by having the vaccine.

As a Unite rep, I would ask for you to all take the vaccine … it is the only way we are going to get back to anything approaching a normal life. I understand there is some reticence but we all need to be safe. Please, please, please have the vaccine.

My experience of having the vaccine itself was very good … I did have side effects, that is true … I took some paracetamol and was absolutely fine.

Laura. NHS worker. Unite the union rep, recovering from Covid-19"
Viruses mutate by nature. The goal of any virus is to spread and infect as many hosts (people) as possible. A virus works hard to become better at what it does – transmit and infect.

The UK is able to pick up the new variants and assess them quickly. As the virus changes we are likely going to have to tweak the vaccines too.

Vaccination will be with us for some time to come. It is very likely that we will have to revaccinate in the future, particularly those who are at high risk, just as we do with the annual flu vaccine.

I had the vaccine in the hope it will give confidence to others to take up the offer of having the vaccine. It is important to protect yourself and others. Myself and my partner have had the vaccine. Take it from us, the vaccine is safe and sound.

Mohammad Taj, 68 years of age. Former bus driver, Yorkshire
JAB FACTS

- The vaccine cannot give you COVID-19.
- The approved COVID-19 vaccines do not contain any animal products or egg.
- The vaccine does not alter your DNA, nor does it contain a microchip or tag.
- There is no evidence that the COVID-19 vaccine is unsafe if you’re pregnant. If you are pregnant, please speak to a healthcare professional before you have the vaccination.
- You can have the COVID-19 vaccine if you’re breastfeeding.
- You do not need to avoid pregnancy after vaccination.
- You do not have to pay for the vaccine.
- The vaccines are very safe.

There are very few people who cannot get the coronavirus vaccine. Specifically, you should not get the coronavirus vaccine if you’ve had a confirmed anaphylactic reaction to:
- Any of the ingredients in the vaccine.
- A previous dose of the vaccine.

Talk to your GP if you’re worried.

STAY ALERT TO SCAMS

Some unscrupulous people are contacting people via text or phone and asking for confirmation that you want to have the vaccine. They then ask you to press a button on the keypad or enter payment or bank details. Pressing the button adds a charge to your phone bill. This is a known scam.

The NHS will NEVER ask you to confirm that you want the vaccine by pressing a button or sending a text or asking for financial details. You do not have to pay for the vaccine.
LET’S PROTECT ONE ANOTHER

The COVID-19 vaccine will provide protective coverage for all of us, provided we all do our bit to protect ourselves and others.

To help protect the young, working age and older members in our communities, to help us move forward, to rebuild and get together safely once again – please join the millions of others and have the vaccine.

High uptake of the vaccine allows us to return to being able to visit friends, family and relatives, to see and hug those that live near or far from us, as well as being able to return to work safety once again.

Please trust your union to keep you safe. Unite asks that you and your family have the vaccine.
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FOR MORE INFORMATION
Please check the NHS website for additional trusted information: