

Messages for renal staff

Covid-19 Vaccine



- People with kidney disease have been severely affected by COVID-19 with high rates of infection, critical illness and death. Haemodialysis patients are at greatest risk of infection as they travel to and from dialysis three times per week.
- There is now a vaccine available and a vaccination programme has started. This offers potential lifesaving protection to many clinically extremely vulnerable patients (CEV).
- People with kidney disease will have many questions about how well the vaccine works for kidney patients, their safety, and how it will be rolled out.
- It is important as health care professionals that we are clear and consistent in our messaging in promoting the COVID-19 vaccination for all kidney patients.

The Vaccine is safe and effective

01 In clinical trials, the Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA vaccine was 95% effective at preventing infection. It is possible that the vaccine is not as efficient in people with kidney disease and people taking immunosuppressants, but it is expected to work well enough to prevent severe infection and so worthwhile given the high risk to kidney patients from COVID-19.

02 The vaccine requires two doses 3 weeks apart. We do not yet know how long the immunity will last for.

03 No differences in outcomes have been found in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups.

04 The Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA vaccine does not contain any virus so people cannot catch COVID-19 from the vaccine nor pass it on to others.

05 Vaccines are only approved for use once they have passed stringent safety tests.

06 There are some side effects, but these are mild and limited to a sore arm or feeling slightly unwell. We don't yet know if there will be any long-term side effects, but we do not anticipate any.

07 Two people in the UK have had an allergic reaction so people with a history of severe allergy should not have this vaccine

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Who will be offered the vaccine and when?

- The government has devised a priority list of who should receive the vaccine and when.
- Vaccination has commenced for everyone over 80 years, including kidney patients of this age. Some patients may have received their vaccine through their GP practice.
- The joint kidney professional bodies have requested that in-centre haemodialysis patients should receive the vaccination as a priority followed by all other renal patients classified as CEV. We are currently awaiting confirmation and will let colleagues know as soon as any renal patients are re-prioritised.
- All patient-facing staff working in kidney care will receive priority access to COVID-19 vaccination (including those who work in commercially run dialysis units and are therefore not directly employed by the NHS) in-line with the government guidance.

Please remember

- Ask eligible patients if they have received the vaccine as part of your 'meet and greet' - they may have received it through their GP.
- Make sure it has been logged on the database
- Make sure all patients who are classified as clinically extremely vulnerable are registered centrally.
- Be positive, clear and consistent in your response to patients who ask advice about being vaccinated.
- Explain to them the importance of getting vaccinated because of the risks of COVID-19 infection.
- Refer them to the Kidney Care UK website or an advocate within your unit

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