# **FAQs about the 2021-22 COVID booster / flu vaccine programme**

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## What’s different this year?

As social mixing starts to return towards pre-pandemic norms, it is expected that winter 2021-22 will be the first winter in the UK when flu (and other respiratory viruses) will co-circulate alongside COVID-19. During last winter (2020-21), measures to control the spread of COVID-19 such as mask-wearing, physical and social distancing, and restricted international travel meant that flu activity levels were extremely low around the world. As a result, we expect that the population will have a lower general level of immunity to flu this winter. (Mathematical modelling indicates the 2021-22 flu season in the UK could be up to 50% larger than typically seen, and may start earlier.) This has the potential to significantly increase the winter pressures that the NHS already usually faces, particularly if infection waves from both viruses coincide.

This winter, more than ever, **getting vaccinated against flu *and* COVID-19 will be of the utmost importance to protect ourselves, our patients, colleagues, family, and friends.**

## Why do I need to get vaccinated?

1. **I’m young/fit/healthy. I never get ill - and even if I did catch flu/COVID-19, I’d probably be fine. Why is everyone saying it’s so important for me to get these vaccines?**Both flu and COVID-19 can be really unpleasant illnesses, even in young, fit people. Those who are very young, elderly or have long-term conditions such as asthma, diabetes, an autoimmune condition, or a disability are especially vulnerable. Many of us care for and work alongside patients and colleagues who are in these at-risk groups. By getting our flu jab and COVID-19 booster, each of us can help to stop these viruses spreading and protect vulnerable people.   
   Remember, just because you’ve been lucky enough to not catch a disease so far, that doesn’t mean you never will. Flu isn’t just a bad cold – it can be extremely unpleasant! In fact, every year several hundred people die because of flu in the UK, and many of them are children, young adults, and middle-aged people.   
   COVID-19 has also caused serious illness (including hospitalisation in intensive care, and ‘long COVID’ syndrome) in younger people, as well as deaths.  
   These deaths and serious complications may be rare, but getting the vaccine is much safer and less unpleasant. So, don’t take the chance – get vaccinated, it’s an easy step to protect yourself.  
   Vaccination also helps to stop you spreading viruses to vulnerable people who might get much more severely ill if they catch them, some of whom can’t get vaccinated themselves. The more people who are vaccinated, the harder it is for disease to spread.
2. **I don’t think I need a vaccine; I’d rather it goes to someone who’s at more risk of getting ill. Can I give up my dose to help someone else instead?**There is plenty of vaccine supply to go around everyone who needs and wants one – in the UK we’ve ordered a record number of flu vaccine doses this year, and at CNTW we’ve ordered 10,000 flu vaccine doses, enough for all our staff and patients. We also have a good supply of COVID-19 booster doses available to us at CNTW.  
   Even if you’re fit and healthy, getting your vaccine helps to protect vulnerable people around you because it reduces the chance of you passing an infection on to them. The more people who are vaccinated, the harder it is for disease to spread.  
   We’re also participating in [UNICEF’s ‘get a jab, give a jab’ campaign](https://www.unicef.org.uk/givejab/) – this means that for every staff member who gets vaccinated, we will make a donation to UNICEF to enable vulnerable children around the world get vaccinated against diseases like polio.
3. **I got my flu jab last year; why do I need another one?**   
   We’re really glad you joined the fight against flu last year. Please do the same again this year, because otherwise you won’t be protected against the new types of flu that are circulating!   
   Unlike some diseases which you can just get vaccinated against once, the flu virus changes and mutates every year (just like we’ve been seeing with the COVID-19 ‘variants’). The World Health Organisation carefully monitors what new types of flu virus are circulating each year. Vaccine manufacturers then get to work on producing a new seasonal flu vaccine targeting these types of flu virus, to ensure the best protection possible. So, it’s really important to get the new flu jab each year.
4. **I’ve had both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine; why do I need a ‘booster’?**The COVID-19 vaccines have been proven to provide high levels of protection against hospitalisation or dying from the virus. To maintain this high level of protection through the coming winter, the JCVI is advising that booster vaccines be offered to those more at risk from COVID-19. This will help to ensure the protection that has been built up in the population does not reduce during the winter months, and that people’s immunity is boosted to provide more protection against variants of the virus.([You can read the JCVI’s full updated advice here](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/jcvi-issues-updated-advice-on-covid-19-booster-vaccination).)
5. **I’m being really careful about washing my hands, staying healthy, etc.** **I think I’m staying pretty safe. So why do I need to get vaccinated as well?**All of those things are really good protective steps, and you should keep it up – but vaccination provides the best possible protection against illness if any virus does get past your defences. If you are doing everything else you can to stay safe, it makes sense to add this one quick, easy and usually painless step to protect yourself and others.

## Who can and can’t get vaccinated?

1. **Who should get the flu vaccine?**   
   All CNTW and NTW Solutions staff are offered the flu vaccine, whether you work in a clinical role or not. This is because you work for a healthcare organisation. You may not be working directly with vulnerable people every day, but you’re likely to come into contact with people who do. So, the more people at CNTW who are vaccinated, the harder it is for the disease to spread among our staff, patients, and the communities we serve.  
   This year, the flu vaccine is being offered to the following groups of people in the general public:  
   All children who were aged 2 to 15 (but not 16 years or older) on 31 August 2021  
   Those aged 6 months to under 50 years in clinical risk groups  
   Pregnant women  
   Those aged 50 years and over  
   Those in long-stay residential care homes  
   Carers  
   Close contacts of immunocompromised individuals  
   Frontline health and social care staff.
2. **Who should get the COVID-19 booster?**The JCVI is advising that booster doses be offered to those who were vaccinated during Phase 1 of the vaccine programme (priority groups 1 to 9). This includes health and social care workers, meaning all fully vaccinated CNTW and NTW Solutions staff will be eligible for boosters.  
   The JCVI has advised that eligible people should receive a COVID-19 booster six months after they completed their vaccine course (i.e., had their second COVID-19 vaccination).
3. **Should I get the flu jab if I’m pregnant?**   
   Yes, you should have the flu vaccine if you're pregnant, as it will protect you, and will also protect your baby against flu for the first few months of their life. Flu can be a really serious illness for pregnant women and young babies. It's safe to have the flu vaccine at any stage of pregnancy. [Find out more about the flu vaccine in pregnancy here](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/flu-jab-vaccine-pregnant/).
4. **Should I get the COVID booster vaccine if I’m pregnant?**The COVID-19 vaccines are recommended in pregnancy. Vaccination is the best way to protect against the known risks of COVID-19 in pregnancy for both women and babies, including admission of the woman to intensive care and premature birth of the baby. Recent advice from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) strongly recommends that it is safe for pregnant women to receive a booster vaccination. The JCVI recommends that women who initially had two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine and are now eligible for a booster, can have the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine for the third dose.  
   The full statement from RCOG can be viewed here:  
   [RCOG Pregnancy and Booster Vaccine.](https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/news/pregnant-women-eligible-for-the-covid-19-booster-vaccine-urged-to-take-up-offer/)  
   [Find out more about COVID-19 vaccines in pregnancy here](https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/coronavirus-covid-19-pregnancy-and-womens-health/covid-19-vaccines-and-pregnancy/covid-19-vaccines-pregnancy-and-breastfeeding/).
5. **I am ill/have been ill recently (with COVID-19 or something else) – should I get vaccinated?**  
   Minor illness without fever is not a reason to postpone vaccination. But if you are acutely unwell with a high temperature, vaccination should be postponed until you have fully recovered. This is to avoid confusion over diagnosis of illness and any adverse effects experienced from the vaccine.
6. **I have recently tested positive for COVID-19, can I be vaccinated?**

If you have had a recent positive COVID test, it is advised that you delay your vaccination for 28 days after the positive test result – this is to avoid any confusion between your symptoms and any adverse effects of the vaccine.

1. **I have an allergy.** **Can I get the flu jab/COVID booster vaccine?**You may be at risk of an allergic reaction to some flu vaccines if you have an egg allergy. This is because some flu vaccines are made using eggs. We will have a supply of egg-free flu vaccine available to vaccinate staff and patients who have an egg allergy. (If you’d like to read more, [this link contains information on the egg content of flu vaccines for 2021-22](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/influenza-vaccine-ovalbumin-content).)  
     
   The MHRA’s advice is that anybody with a history of immediate-onset anaphylaxis (allergic reaction) to the ingredients contained in one of the COVID vaccines should not be vaccinated with that type of vaccine. Information for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, including ingredients, is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-approval-of-pfizer-biontech-vaccine-for-covid-19>

Checking for allergies is a routine part of the process before giving someone any vaccine or new medicine. Having these conversations – as well as being able to deal with allergic reactions in the rare case they do happen, is a central part of training for our vaccinators.   
If you have allergies and you wish to discuss this through prior to receiving your flu/COVID-19 booster vaccine, please talk to your GP.

1. **I need to avoid certain ingredients/substances - what are the ingredients of the flu jab / COVID-19 booster vaccine?**  
   Some flu vaccines are made using eggs. We will have a supply of egg-free flu vaccine available to vaccinate staff and patients who cannot use vaccines containing egg.  
   None of the influenza vaccines contain thiomersal as an added preservative.   
     
   There is no material from foetuses or animals, including eggs, in any of the COVID-19 vaccines. Information for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, including ingredients, is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-approval-of-pfizer-biontech-vaccine-for-covid-19>

Information about the COVID vaccines from The Vegan Society can be found here: <https://www.vegansociety.com/news/news/vegan-society-response-covid-19-vaccine>   
  
The British Islamic Medical Association have produced statements for the Muslim community on the various COVID vaccines, which can be found here: <https://britishima.org/operation-vaccination/hub/statements/>

1. **Can I have my COVID booster if I’ve only had one dose of the COVID vaccine so far?**No; to be eligible for the COVID-19 booster, you need to have had both doses of a COVID vaccine first. Staff who wish to receive their first or second dose of covid vaccine can book an appointment via the national booking service - [Book your COVID vaccine appointments online here.](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/)

## How will this year’s vaccination programme work at CNTW?

1. **When will I be able to get my vaccine(s)?**   
   Vaccination clinics will be running at locations across the Trust from Monday 27 September until the end of October. There will also be some clinic dates in late November/early December.  
   As staff become eligible for the COVID-19 booster (which becomes due six months after the date of your second COVID-19 vaccine dose), they will be able to book a clinic slot, where they can receive their COVID-19 booster and flu jab at the same time.  
   Not all staff will receive their booking invite at the same time – it will be based on when your COVID-19 booster is due. You can now check when your COVID-19 booster is due on your ‘My Workforce Information’ dashboard.  
   Try and book your clinic slot as soon as possible once you have been invited; your immune response to most vaccinations takes about 2 weeks to fully develop, so the sooner you get vaccinated the sooner you’ll protect yourself and others around you.   
   If you want to get your flu jab sooner, before you are invited to book into a CNTW clinic, you can get it from your local GP or pharmacy. (You will need to self-declare so that we know you have had your flu jab elsewhere; we will share details on how to do this soon.)
2. **Where can I get vaccinated?**   
   From 27 September until the end of October, there will be clinics offering the COVID-19 booster and flu vaccine running in each of our four localities:

* Keswick House at St Nicholas Hospital, Newcastle
* Druridge ward at St George’s Park, Morpeth
* Meadowview at Hopewood Park, Sunderland
* Edenwood at the Carleton Clinic, Carlisle

If you’d prefer, you can also get your flu vaccine at your GP surgery, a pharmacy offering the service, or your midwifery service if you're pregnant. You may have to pay at the pharmacy. If you get your flu jab from anywhere other an a CNTW clinic, you will need to self-declare so that we know you have had your flu jab elsewhere; we will share details on how to do this soon.

1. **How do I book my vaccination appointment?**  
   As staff become eligible for the COVID-19 booster (which becomes due six months after the date of your second COVID-19 vaccine dose), they will be able to book a clinic slot, where they can receive their COVID-19 booster and flu jab at the same time.   
   Please look out for an email from ‘Info@inhealthcare.co.uk’ inviting you to book your slot at a vaccination clinic. You’ll also receive a text from ‘CNTWNOREPLY’ to let you know you’ve received the booking email.  
   We are also making arrangements to support staff who do not have frequent access to emails to book their vaccinations.   
   Please note, not all staff will receive their booking invite at the same time – it will be based on when your COVID-19 booster is due. This will be a minimum of 6 months after the second dose of the COVID vaccine. Your ‘My Workforce Information’ dashboard will show when your covid booster vaccination is due.
2. **What should I expect at the vaccine clinic?**We are running our clinics using a similar model to the one that helped us deliver thousands of COVID-19 vaccinations in a matter of weeks earlier this year. You will be required to wear a mask and will be greeted at the door and invited to take a seat, where a member of staff will run through some questions and checks with you (including about allergies) to ensure you are able to receive the vaccines. You will then be shown to a vaccination bay, where a member of staff will administer your COVID-19 booster and flu jab. The vaccines with be administered one into the muscle of each arm. It doesn’t matter which is administered first. Staff in the clinic will be wearing masks, gloves and an apron and the area will be cleaned regularly. Finally, you will need to wait in the socially distanced observation area for 15 minutes before leaving just in case you experience any adverse reactions.
3. **Can I get my first/second COVID vaccine dose at the vaccination clinics being run by CNTW this winter?**Unfortunately not. Due to the logistical challenge of rapidly providing the flu and COVID booster vaccines to all of our 9,000 staff as quickly as possible, we cannot provide first or second COVID vaccine doses in our flu/COVID booster clinics.   
   So, if you have not yet received both doses of the COVID vaccine, we encourage you to book an appointment to get fully vaccinated as soon as possible. [Book your COVID vaccine appointments online here.](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/)
4. **What will the COVID booster vaccine be –** **Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Moderna, or something else?  
   Will my COVID booster have to be the same type of COVID vaccine I got (e.g., if I got Pfizer, will my booster be Pfizer too?)**The JCVI advises a preference for the Pfizer-BioNTech (also called Comirnaty) vaccine for the booster programme, regardless of which vaccine brand someone received for their primary doses. This follows data from the COV-BOOST trial that indicates the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is safe and well tolerated as a third dose and provides a better booster response than the AstraZeneca vaccine. At CNTW, we will be receiving stocks of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.
5. **Are these vaccines mandatory? What happens if I don’t want the flu jab and/or COVID booster vaccine?**You may feel you do not need or want the COVID-19 booster and/or flu jab. These vaccinations are optional, and it is your choice - but we encourage you to read through the rest of this document before you make your decision. It explains why we are urging all of our staff to get the flu jab and COVID-19 booster (once eligible), even if you are fit, healthy and not in a vulnerable group yourself. It may also answer other questions or concerns you have about these vaccines and how they work.   
   Frontline health and social care workers are expected to have the flu jab to protect those they care for, themselves, and their colleagues.   
   We are making every effort to find out the barriers and concerns that prevent staff from getting vaccinated. We’ll try our very best to address any concerns or questions that you have. If there is something you are concerned about which is not covered in these FAQs, please contact [CovidFluVaccine@cntw.nhs.uk](mailto:CovidFluVaccine@cntw.nhs.uk) so that we can support you.  
     
   Your professional body may also have a position on whether people in your profession should get the vaccine:  
   [Covid 19 Questions and Answers - GMC (gmc-uk.org)](https://www.gmc-uk.org/ethical-guidance/ethical-hub/covid-19-questions-and-answers)[Information about vaccines - The Nursing and Midwifery Council (nmc.org.uk)](https://www.nmc.org.uk/news/coronavirus/vaccines/)   
   [Pharmacy workers encouraged to get their COVID-19 vaccination | GPhC Pharmacyregulation.org)](https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/news/all-frontline-pharmacy-workers-encouraged-get-their-covid-19-vaccination)   
   [Vaccinations: what you need to know | (hcpc-uk.org)](https://www.hcpc-uk.org/covid-19/vaccinations-what-you-need-to-know/)
6. **Can you vaccinate other people in my family/household who don’t work for CNTW/NTW Solutions?**

Unfortunately, we can’t do this. If others in your family/household are eligible for the flu jab and/or COVID-19 booster vaccine but not employed by CNTW or NTW Solutions, they will be invited to be vaccinated elsewhere.

1. **Are we vaccinating people who work for CNTW’s partner organisations?**

Yes, we are offering the covid booster vaccinations to our clinical partners.

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## How do these vaccines work?

1. **How does a vaccine help to protect me from getting ill?**  
   Vaccines teach your immune system how to create antibodies that protect you from diseases. They do this by ‘tricking’ your body into thinking it has been infected with a new virus. There isn’t any live virus in the vaccine given to adults, but there are either fragments of dead virus (in the flu vaccine) or proteins that mimic the ones on the outside of the virus (in the COVID vaccines). Your immune system detects these and thinks it has been infected, even though there’s no risk of you actually getting ill from what’s in the vaccine. Your immune system then creates antibodies that target that particular virus. This means that if you are exposed to that virus after you’ve had the vaccine, your body already knows how to fight it off. It's much safer for your immune system to learn this through vaccination than by catching the disease itself.
2. **I’ve heard the flu jab could actually give me flu / the COVID vaccine could give me COVID-19. Do these vaccines contain live viruses?**   
   There are several types of flu and COVID vaccine given to adults, but none of them contains live viruses, so they cannot make you ill with flu or COVID-19. Instead, to help your body learn to recognise the virus, there are fragments of dead virus (in the flu vaccine for adults) or proteins that mimic the ones on the outside of the virus (in the COVID vaccines). So, there is no live virus at all in the flu jab or the COVID booster vaccine.  
     
   Some people do get some side effects from vaccines, which can feel like mild flu or COVID (such as muscle aches or a higher temperature). These are actually just a sign that your immune system is reacting to the vaccine and learning how to fight the virus. Your side effects are unlikely to be nearly as bad as how you’d feel if you really did get ill!

## How effective are these vaccines?

1. **How effective is the flu jab?**   
   The flu vaccine gives us good protection against flu. Flu vaccines help protect us against the main types of flu viruses each year, because the World Health Organisation carefully monitors what new types of flu virus are circulating each year. Vaccine manufacturers then get to work on producing a new seasonal flu vaccine targeting these types of flu virus, to ensure the best protection possible. No vaccine is ever 100% effective, so there's still a chance you might get flu. It can take up to two weeks for you to build up immunity to flu after you’ve had the vaccine. But if you do get flu after vaccination, it's likely to be milder and not last as long. Having the flu vaccine will also help to stop you spreading flu to other people who may be more at risk of serious problems if they catch flu. The flu jab is usually around 60-80% effective.
2. **How effective is the COVID booster vaccine?**  
   The COVID-19 vaccines are proven to provide high levels of protection against hospitalisation or dying from the virus. However, insufficient time has passed to know for sure what levels of protection might be expected 6 to 12 months after someone’s second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Taking a precautionary position, the JCVI has advised that, on balance, it is preferable to maintain a high level of protection in vulnerable adults throughout winter by providing a booster vaccine. The JCVI has confirmed that recent data, from the COV-BOOST trial, indicates the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is well tolerated as a third dose and provides a strong booster response.

## Are these vaccines safe?

1. **Is it really safe to get the flu jab and COVID booster vaccine at the same time? Why has this guidance changed from last year?**   
   During the initial rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine, national guidance was that it should ideally be administered at least 7 days apart from any other vaccination (including flu). This was to enable any side effects / adverse events from the covid vaccines to be reported and identified and not mistakenly attributed.   
     
   This year, trials have been undertaken to establish the safety and efficacy of administering COVID-19 vaccine and the influenza vaccine at the same time. The ComFluCOV trial has been carried out by researchers from the Universities of Bristol and Oxford and University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust. The JCVI have announced that data from this trial indicates that co-administration of the influenza and COVID-19 vaccines is generally well tolerated, with no reduction in immune response to either vaccine. Therefore, they have advised that the two vaccines may be co-administered where operationally practical.  
     
   All medicines, including vaccines, are highly regulated. Some people were concerned that the COVID-19 vaccines were released for use more quickly than the usual. Special measures were approved to allow this research to happen at a much faster pace than usual without compromising safety. For example, in some cases different phases of clinical trials can overlap instead of running sequentially, which speeds up the clinical process. Clinical trials have also managed to recruit people very quickly, as the urgency of this pandemic means thousands of people have been willing to volunteer. As with the original vaccines, research and development has been undertake to ascertain the need for and the effectiveness of booster doses of the vaccination.   
     
   Because this is a new combination of vaccines, we understand that you might feel wary. But it might help to remember that we often give other types of vaccine together very safely. For example, babies have the 6-in-1 vaccine (protects against 6 serious childhood conditions; diphtheria, hepatitis B, Haemophilus influenzae type b, polio, tetanus, and whooping cough) and children receive the combined Measles, Mumps and Rubella vaccine. These combined vaccines have been proven to be very safe following millions of administered doses.  
     
   Having more than one vaccine at the same time doesn’t ‘overload’ or ‘weaken’ your immune system. The recent ComFluCOV trial showed that co-administration of the influenza and COVID-19 vaccines does not result in a reduced immune response to either vaccine.
2. **What side effects does the flu jab have?**   
   Flu vaccines are very safe. Most side effects are mild and only last for a day or so, such as a slightly raised temperature, muscle aches, or a sore arm where the needle went in. (Most of these side effects are actually just a sign that your immune system is reacting to the vaccine, learning how to fight the virus.) To help reduce the discomfort, try to continue to move your arm regularly. You can also take a painkiller, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen.   
   It's very rare for anyone to have a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to the flu vaccine. If this does happen, it usually happens within minutes, and the person who vaccinates you will be trained to deal with allergic reactions and treat them immediately.  
   Anyone can report a suspected side effect of a vaccine through the [Yellow Card Scheme](https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/).
3. **What side effects does the COVID booster have?**The COVID vaccines are very safe. Most side effects are mild and only last for a day or so, such as a slightly raised temperature, tiredness, muscle aches or headaches, or a sore arm where the needle went in. (Most of these side effects are actually just a sign that your immune system is reacting to the vaccine, learning how to fight the virus.) To help reduce the discomfort, try to continue to move your arm regularly. You can also take a painkiller, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen.  
   It's very rare for anyone to have a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to a COVID vaccine. If this does happen, it usually happens within minutes, and the person who vaccinates you will be trained to deal with allergic reactions and treat them immediately.  
     
   Serious adverse effects from the vaccines are thankfully incredibly rare, but they have been widely reported in the press and people have understandably had concerns.   
   Very rare reports of myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) and pericarditis (inflammation of the lining around the heart) have been reported following the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. The cases appear to be more common in adolescent boys/younger men shortly after the second dose of the vaccine. These have been reported as generally mild symptoms which have resolved spontaneously or with standard treatment and rest. And t is important to acknowledge that there is also a risk of developing this condition following infection with COVID-19.   
     
   Information about adverse effects is acquired via the Yellow Card Scheme, operated by the Medicines and Health Care Products Regulatory Agency. Health care professionals and members of the public are encouraged to report and adverse effects of the vaccine (or other medications) via the scheme which then identifies any emerging problems which helps when future decisions are being made.  
   You can report any adverse effects here [Official MHRA side effect and adverse incident reporting site for coronavirus treatments and vaccines | Coronavirus (COVID-19)](https://coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/)  
     
   You can view an up to date summary of reported adverse effects here: [Coronavirus vaccine - weekly summary of Yellow Card reporting - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-vaccine-adverse-reactions/coronavirus-vaccine-summary-of-yellow-card-reporting)
4. **How do we know these vaccines are safe; what tests do they go through?**   
   Creating the flu vaccine is an annual process, which has been done for many years, adapting an existing vaccine to contain the new seasonal strains of flu. This is why they’re able to make it in just 6 months (starting in Spring to deliver the vaccine in time for September). The process used to make the flu vaccine, using virus strains incubated in a lab that are then killed and purified to be made into vaccines, is a tried-and-tested process which has been safely used for decades. Every year the seasonal flu jab is given to millions of people in the UK alone, and many more around the world.   
     
   All medicines, and vaccines are no exception, highly regulated by the authorities. The same stringent regulations apply to COVID-19 vaccines. Some people were concerned that the COVID-19 vaccines were released for use more quickly than the usual. Special measures were approved to allow this research to happen at a much faster pace than usual without compromising safety Researchers have worked hard to enable this research to happen at a much faster pace than usual without compromising safety. For example, in some cases different phases of clinical trials can overlap instead of running sequentially, which speeds up the clinical process. Clinical trials have also managed to recruit people very quickly, as the urgency of this pandemic means thousands of people have been willing to volunteer. Clinical trials are reviewed and authorised by the MHRA. Information on trials that are currently being undertaken on COVID-19 vaccines can be found here: [COVID-19 Trials - Be Part of Research (nihr.ac.uk)](https://bepartofresearch.nihr.ac.uk/COVID-19-Research/How-to-get-involved/)  
     
   The NHS will not offer any vaccinations to the public until independent experts have signed off that it is safe to do so. As with any medicine, vaccines are highly regulated products, and these vaccines comply with all the strict regulatory rules. There are checks at every stage in the development and manufacturing process, and continued monitoring once they have been authorised and are being used in the wider population.  
   [You can read about how vaccines are licensed, tested, and monitored on the Oxford University Vaccine Knowledge Project website](http://vk.ovg.ox.ac.uk/vaccine-development).  
    **If there is something you are concerned about which is not covered in these FAQs, please contact** [**CovidFluVaccine@cntw.nhs.uk**](mailto:CovidFluVaccine@cntw.nhs.uk) **so we can support you.**