

Immunosuppressed Patients – Third Dose & Booster Dose Eligibility Criteria for Individuals 16+

Please note that all clinical advice provided below has been extracted from the [COVID-19 Green Book Chapter 14a](#). Health Care Professionals should also consult the Green Book to answer any queries.

What does immunosuppression mean?

Immunosuppression happens to people due to disease or treatment. These people are considered to be at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19. A hospital clinician or GP is able to identify these people, based on their clinical judgements.

Why do immunosuppressed patients need a 3rd primary dose?

Some immunosuppressed patients are eligible for a third vaccination eight weeks after their second dose. This is not the same as a booster. This third vaccination is necessary to strengthen the protection provided by their first two vaccinations. They will be offered Pfizer or Moderna, unless there is a specific medical reason for them to receive AstraZeneca, and that will be decided on a case-by-case basis, where appropriate. More details about the vaccine are available on the [gov.uk website](#) ([Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation \(JCVI\) advice on third primary dose vaccination - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#))

Can individuals immunosuppressed aged 16+ receive a booster dose?

Yes, JCVI guidance has been updated to reflect that immunosuppressed patients can now receive booster doses after their 1st, 2nd and 3rd primary course vaccinations. Patients will become eligible for a booster dose from 3 months (91 days) after their 3rd dose. The patient's GP or hospital specialist will need to advise them when it's due. The same eligibility letter that was issued for the patient's 3rd dose, can be used again as proof of eligibility to receive their booster vaccination.

Who is eligible?

At the current time, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises that a third primary dose be offered to individuals aged 12 years and over with severe immunosuppression in proximity of their first or second COVID-19 vaccine doses in the primary schedule. This is not the same cohort defined during the first lockdown as 'clinically extremely vulnerable' and advised to shield, but there is predictable overlap between the two groups. A full list of conditions that are within this category is available on the [gov.uk website](#)

All those aged 16 years and above who are household contacts of immunosuppressed individuals of any age are eligible for a booster vaccine.

There is separate guidance for 12 – 15 year olds who are immunosuppressed.

How should patients receive a vaccination if they are eligible?

If a patient is eligible for a **third vaccination** they should have already been contacted by their GP or hospital consultant and offered an appointment. Their GP or hospital consultant should complete the eligibility assessment. If a patient does meet the criteria, they will be given a letter of eligibility. The letter will include the choice of vaccine and the recommended timing for them to receive it.

If a patient is eligible for a **booster vaccination**, their GP or hospital specialist will need to contact them to make them aware. The same eligibility letter that was issued for their 3rd dose, can be used again as proof of eligibility to receive their booster vaccination.

How can they book an appointment?

Once given a letter of eligibility by their consultant or GP, they can book an appointment for their 3rd dose via the National Booking System (NBS) website - [Book or manage a coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccination - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#) - or by calling 119 or the Suffolk and North East Essex COVID-19 Vaccination Helpline – 0344 257 3961. Alternatively, patients can attend a walk-in clinic – details are on the Suffolk and North East Essex Vaccination Service website - <https://sneevaccine.org.uk/> or [Find a walk-in coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccination site - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#).

If a patient is due to receive their booster vaccination, they are unable to book this via the National Booking System. Instead, patients will need to call the Suffolk and North East Essex COVID-19 Vaccination Helpline – 0344 257 3961. Or alternatively, they can attend a walk-in clinic - details are on the Suffolk and North East Essex Vaccination Service website - <https://sneevaccine.org.uk/> or [Find a walk-in coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccination site - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#).

Patients must bring their letter of eligibility to the clinic to receive their vaccine. They can use the same letter of eligibility given for their 3rd dose, to receive their booster dose.