

**24 Feb 2021**

**Update from Dr Mark Howcutt - Haddenham Medical Centre**

**How are we doing at getting our patients vaccinated?**

We met the Government target of the first four high-risk groups being offered a vaccination appointment by the 15th of February. The Government has now asked us to focus on at-risk clinical groups - individuals aged 16 years to 64 years with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease with COVID. This is similar to, but not the same as, the group of patients who are called each year for the flu jab.

**Why am I being offered a jab now when my older neighbour has not yet?**

There is a strict policy determining who will be offered the vaccine first. This is devised and regularly updated by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (the JCVI) and not by us. This policy is designed to ensure that people receive the vaccine quickly but fairly according to their risks of harm from the virus. Much of this is determined by age but as we progress down to younger age groups, other risk factors are taken into consideration. This means that some younger patients may be at higher risk than older patients due to medical conditions and so will be invited before their older neighbours.

**Why am I not being offered a vaccine yet when my friend who lives in a different part of England has already had theirs?**

There was some variation across the country in how quickly sites were set up. New sites were only approved in waves as the supply of vaccine allowed. The NHS is trying to provide more vaccine to centres that have more patients to vaccinate than others but this system is imperfect and the supply uneven.

**I have had my first dose. When will I get my second dose?**

Second doses of both the Pfizer and the AstraZeneca vaccines will be given towards the end of the recommended vaccine dosing schedule of 12 weeks. This will so that as many people as possible can receive the first dose and start receiving some protection.

If we provided your first vaccination, we will invite you to book an appointment for your second vaccination when it is the right time. Be assured we will be checking our medical records frequently for patients who need their second dose.

We know that patients who obtain their vaccination from a pharmacy-led vaccination site (like the Aylesbury Odeon) or the mass-vaccination centre (like the Aylesbury Campus of Bucks New University) are given their second appointment when they attend for their first. Unfortunately, we cannot do this at GP-led vaccination sites because the NHS will not guarantee to us when we will be given vaccine supplies in advance. We usually only get one or two weeks' notice of our deliveries and then book patients in when we know a supply of vaccine is coming.

**Will I be able to get my COVID vaccinations at the Vicary Pharmacy in Haddenham?**

We have heard from Yogesh Patel that he has been successful at becoming a pharmacy-led COVID vaccination centre. This means he will soon be providing COVID vaccinations from the pharmacy in Haddenham to patients who book via the national booking system either online or by phone. This service is for people from anywhere within a 30-45 minute drive of Haddenham. He cannot restrict this service to local residents. He cannot book patients in if they contact him directly and we, at the surgery, are not able to book patients in there if they ask us.

We know that many patients have been asking why we have not had vaccinations at the practice. We have been asking to be a vaccination centre since mid-December and been refused repeatedly. At the same time, we welcome other sites such as our local pharmacy, so that everyone is vaccinated as quickly as possible. It has been possible for pharmacies to gain approval when GP surgeries have not because the NHS has different rules for the pharmacy-led sites to those run by GPs.

We remain committed to the GP-led vaccination site at the Stoke Mandeville Stadium in Aylesbury where we, with the help of our Patient Participation Group (PPG) and many of our patients as volunteers, have played a pivotal role in setting this up and running it.

**What was your key advice again?**

We want our patients to be protected as soon as possible. So our advice remains: when you are invited, get whichever COVID vaccine you can, wherever you can, and as soon as you can!