



BSH position statement on the roll out of COVID-19 vaccinations – 18/12/2020

People with heart failure are at increased risk of severe COVID-19. The British Society for Heart Failure strongly recommends that all those eligible accept vaccination, if offered.

Vaccines reduce the risk of infection by a specific virus or bacteria. Vaccines may reduce the severity of infection if you are unfortunate enough to catch the infection despite vaccination. After getting vaccinated, you develop immunity to that disease, without having to get the disease first (a less favourable means of gaining immunity). At a population level, vaccines also make it difficult for infection to spread from person to person, because they reduce the number of vulnerable individuals in the population. Unlike most medicines, which treat or cure diseases, vaccines prevent them and may help eradicate infectious diseases.

COVID-19 can affect anyone. If you are an older adult and have a long-term health condition like heart failure, CoVid-19 can be very serious and, in some cases, fatal.

The vaccines are an important breakthrough in the fight against coronavirus.

This document has been produced to reassure health care professionals and patients of the safety and benefits of the new vaccines. Heart failure specialists can reassure their patients that thousands of people have received a COVID-19 vaccine and reports of serious side effects, such as allergic reactions, have been very rare.

The **only** groups currently advised **not** to take the vaccine are people with a history of life-threatening allergic reactions (called anaphylaxis) and pregnant women.

The UK started vaccinating patients against COVID-19 on 8th December 2020. The first COVID-19 vaccine was produced by Pfizer/BioNTech. This vaccine contains no live viruses and has been given to more than 20,000 people in studies without safety concerns. It has met the strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness set out by the independent Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). It is likely that COVID-19 vaccines produced by AstraZeneca/Oxford University, Moderna and other companies will become available in 2021.

Any coronavirus vaccine that is approved for use must go through the same sort of rigorous clinical trials and safety checks that all other licensed medicines go through. The MHRA follows international standards of safety.

Many vaccines are in development. They will only be available on the NHS once they have been thoroughly tested to make sure they are safe and effective. Information will change as the vaccination program rolls out and as other vaccines are considered for use.

Links to up to date information are available here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/?priority-taxon=774cee22-d896-44c1-a611-e3109cce8eae>