

New vaccine advice for adults living with adults who are immunosuppressed

JCVI recommends that adults living with adults who are immunosuppressed should be prioritised for the COVID-19 vaccine.

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The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has advised the government to prioritise people for the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine who are over 16 and living with adults who have weakened immune systems, such as those with blood cancer, HIV or those on immunosuppressive treatment including chemotherapy.

Adults who are immunosuppressed have a weaker immune system, meaning they are less able to fight infections naturally. These individuals are more likely to have poorer outcomes following COVID-19 infection and recent evidence suggests that they may not respond as well to the COVID-19 vaccine as others.

There is growing evidence that the COVID-19 vaccines may reduce the chance of someone who has been vaccinated passing the virus on. Given this emerging evidence, the JCVI advises that those over 16 years of age who live with severely immunosuppressed adults are offered the COVID-19 vaccination alongside priority group 6. This will help limit the spread of the virus to immunosuppressed adults.

Professor Wei Shen Lim, Chair of COVID-19 Immunisation within the JCVI, commented:

The vaccination programme has so far seen high vaccine uptake and very encouraging results on infection rates, hospitalisations and mortality. Yet we know that the vaccine isn't as effective in those who are immunosuppressed. Our latest advice will help reduce the risk of infection in those who may not be able to fully benefit from being vaccinated themselves.

Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisation at Public Health England, said:

Our surveillance systems and research studies are showing that the COVID-19 vaccines can reduce asymptomatic infection and limit transmission of the virus. By vaccinating those who live with adults who are immunosuppressed, we can further help protect vulnerable people.

Household contacts considered as a priority would be those over 16 who share living accommodation with adults who are immunosuppressed. The JCVI does not currently advise vaccination of household contacts of immunosuppressed children, or household contacts of immunosuppressed adults who are themselves children.