

## For attention of GP practices and hospitals: Third vaccine dose eligibility for people with Crohn's and Colitis – the two main forms of Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD).

This letter provides information and further clarification for vaccine providers regarding people with Crohn's and Colitis who are eligible to receive the third COVID-19 vaccine dose.

The [Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisation \(JCVI\)](#) has recommended that people aged 12 years and over who were severely immunosuppressed at the time of their first or second COVID vaccines should receive a third dose of COVID-19 vaccine. This is different from the national booster programme.

The JCVI is recommending that some people with Crohn's or Colitis who were taking certain immunosuppressants at the time of their primary vaccine doses should be offered a third dose to give as much protection as possible<sup>1</sup>

### In the 3 months before their first or second dose of vaccine:

- Adalimumab, infliximab, golimumab, ustekinumab, tofacitinib
- Long-term moderate dose corticosteroids (equivalent to  $\geq 10$ mg prednisolone per day for more than 4 weeks)
- High-dose corticosteroids (equivalent to  $\geq 20$ mg prednisolone per day) for more than 10 days in the previous month
- Methotrexate
- Azathioprine or mercaptopurine

(See [Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation \(JCVI\) advice on third primary dose vaccination](#)) The Green Book states that this list "is not exhaustive" and "the prescriber should apply clinical judgment".

GPs and hospital teams across the UK have been asked to identify these patients and arrange third doses. The JCVI has advised that specialist teams identify eligible patients then give GPs advice on who should have a third primary dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

We are concerned that this is leading to delays and people may be missed. We therefore ask that GPs offer the third primary dose of the COVID-19 vaccine to eligible patients that contact them directly. It is important that this group are given a third dose vaccine first, and not a booster vaccine. This is because there are different vaccine doses recommended for third dose and booster vaccines<sup>2</sup>.

People who have received a third primary dose should be offered a booster (fourth dose) at least three months after their third dose. See following guidance from the JCVI & NHS:

**Severely immunosuppressed individuals who have completed their primary course (three doses) should be offered a booster dose with a minimum of three months between the third primary and booster dose. Those who have not yet received their third dose may be given the third dose now to avoid further delay. A further booster dose can be given in three months, in line with the clinical advice on optimal timing.<sup>3</sup>**

We hope this information is helpful and thank you for reducing the health risk of your patients at this challenging time. More information about the COVID-19 vaccine for people with Crohn's and Colitis can be found at:

[www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/covid19-vaccine](http://www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/covid19-vaccine)

<sup>1</sup> However, the British Society of Gastroenterology (BSG) and Crohn's & Colitis UK recommend that all people with Crohn's or Colitis who are on any immunosuppressive treatment receive a third or booster dose of vaccine. This would include people taking vedolizumab or lower doses of azathioprine or mercaptopurine. [Read the BSG position statement here.](#)

<sup>2</sup> JCVI have advised a preference for mRNA vaccines for the third primary dose, with the option of the AstraZeneca Vaxzevria vaccine for individuals who have received this vaccine previously where this would facilitate delivery. MRHA have licensed half dose Moderna vaccine for booster but not third dose.

<sup>3</sup> [JCVI advice in response to the emergence of the B. 1. 1.529 \(Omicron\) variant: next steps for deployment](#)