

UPDATE FROM NWL CCGS
15 Jan 2021

Re: Covid-19 vaccination: revised guidance on timing of second dose

Patients may have heard that there has been a change to national guidance on the timing of the second dose of the Covid-19 vaccine. I am writing to clarify the position that has been recommended nationally and agreed across the NHS in North West London.

As has been widely reported, there has been a rapid increase in Covid-19 cases over the last few months, with many more patients having to be treated in our hospitals. As the new variant of the virus appears even more contagious, we need to increase the speed at which patients and frontline health and care workers are vaccinated.

Updated guidance from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation and the Chief Medical Officers sets out the need to increase the space between the first and second dose for both Oxford and Pfizer vaccines.

The first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is calculated as providing around 90% protection; the figure is around 70% for the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine, with high protection against severe disease. Given the high level of protection afforded by the first dose in both cases, the revised guidance is that vaccinating more people with a single dose will prevent more deaths and hospitalisations than vaccinating a smaller number of people with two doses. By prioritising first dose vaccinations, we can vaccinate twice as many people in the next two to three months.

Given the need to vaccinate as many people as possible, including all frontline health and care staff, **appointments for the second dose of both vaccines are being rearranged to take place close to 12 weeks after the first dose.** This will apply across all vaccination sites in North West London.

We are sorry for any confusion or disappointment caused by rescheduled appointments, but we believe that the new approach will save more lives and prevent more people ending up in hospital.