**Covid-19 Information Update Issue 12 (updates from previous Bulletin in yellow)**

**Covid Information Champion update** - The number of coronavirus cases in Hertfordshire is falling but now is not the time to be complacent. We must continue to play our part to stop the spread. We are still in a national lockdown, and we are urging all residents to stay home whenever possible. Thanks to the work of GP practices, hospitals, pharmacies and our larger vaccination sites, more than **670,772** people have received at least one vaccine dose in Hertfordshire and West Essex.

**Roadmap out of lockdown -** Lockdown restrictions will continue to ease next week in line with Step 2 of the government’s roadmap out of lockdown. This means that from **12 April**, hospitality venues such as pubs and restaurants will be allowed to reopen for outdoor service. It also allows more indoor settings to reopen, including non-essential shops, hairdressers and gyms. Step 2 of the roadmap also allows for overnight stays away from home, but only in self-contained accommodation and with members of the same household and support bubble. Libraries and community centres will also be permitted to reopen, along with zoos, theme parks and drive-in cinemas. It is important that we all continue to follow the rules of social distancing, washing our hands, wearing a face covering and isolating and getting tested if you get symptoms. For the Govt Road Map [**Click Here**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021-summary)

**Testing -** On 5 April, the Prime Minister announced that all people in England will now be able to access twice weekly rapid tests for coronavirus from 9 April. Twice weekly rapid testing enables us to find cases and prevent the spread of infection. Getting into the habit of twice weekly testing as part of our everyday lives will help us all to play our part and do what we can to keep each other safe and, alongside the vaccine, ensure we can continue to ease our way out of lockdown.

**There has been a change in policy so that anyone who has a positive rapid test result in an assisted site, such as the community testing sites, must also now book a PCR test. This is to confirm the rapid test result and will also help with finding variants.**

To find your nearest collection site and to order online [**Click Here**](https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests)

To book a test for yourself at one of the county council’s **Rapid Test Centres** [**Click Here**](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/rapidtest)

**More people added to priority list for vaccinations -** Earlier this week, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advised that people **over 16 years of age who live with severely immunosuppressed adults** – including people with HIV, or cancer, should also now be offered the COVID-19 vaccination. This is in response to evidence which has recently emerged which suggests that COVID-19 vaccinations may not be as effective in those adults who are immunosuppressed as it is in others. By vaccinating their adult household contacts, the aim is to reduce the risk of infection for immunosuppressed people. GP practices are starting the process of contacting patients who are immunosuppressed, to identify people in their household who are now eligible to receive the jab.

**Vaccine supplies -** With the current reduction in the available supply of vaccine, fewer appointments will be available for first doses during April, as the bulk of vaccine supplies will be used to fully vaccinate people who are due their second jab. People who have already booked appointments for first doses and those people due their second dose will still receive their vaccine. Vaccination centres are currently operating reduced opening hours while vaccine supplies are limited and people have been contacted if their appointment needs to be rearranged. The revised opening times for appointments are available **[Click Here](https://www.hct.nhs.uk/covid-19/covid-19-vaccination-site-opening-times-over-easter/)**

**Frontline Health and care staff -** Vaccine centres are currently offering walk-in sessions for frontline health and care staff who have yet to book their first or second dose appointments. They can turn up with relevant ID, their NHS number and vaccination card if they’ve already had their first dose, at the times advertised [**Click Here**](https://www.hct.nhs.uk/covid-19/walk-in-vaccination-times-for-health-and-social-care-staff-1st-and-2nd-doses-of-covid-19-vaccination-astra-zeneca-from-now-until-12-april/)

**Unpaid carers -** Unpaid carers who are not on their GP’s register of Carers or who are not known to council services, will need to contact their GP practice to arrange their vaccine, as they will no longer be able to book online using the National Booking System.

**Second dose appointments -** Everyone who booked their first appointment at a pharmacy or large vaccination centre either using the National Booking System website or by calling 119, should already have a second dose appointment. Anyone who had their first vaccination at a GP-led vaccination centre will be contacted by their GP practice and given a date for their second appointment.

**Vaccination Programme** - There is information available about the vaccination programme, including resources for adults with learning disabilities and resources in different languages and formats [**Click Here**](https://covid.healthierfuture.org.uk/information-and-resources)

**[Click Here](https://www.cdaherts.org.uk/covid-information-bulletins/?doing_wp_cron=1617877994.1495609283447265625000)** for resources in different languages including leaflets and videos in Arabic and Urdu

**Questions and answers about the Vaccine are available** [**Click Here**](https://covid.healthierfuture.org.uk/vaccination-faqs)

**Are you registered with a GP? -** To make sure you get your call to be vaccinated, it is much easier if you are registered with a GP surgery. Anyone can register with a GP surgery. You do not need proof of address or immigration status. If you are not registered, for instructions on how to do so [**Click Here**](https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/gps/how-to-register-with-a-gp-surgery/)

**Keep on doing the basics:**

* wash your hands regularly and thoroughly
* keep your distance from others
* wear a face-covering when required
* self-isolate when told to do so

**If you or your family need financial or practical help and advice with the cost of food or fuel this winter, please get in touch with HertsHelp**:

[**Click Here**](https://www.hertshelp.net/hertshelp.aspx) or email **info@hertshelp.net** or call **0300 123 4044**

For more information and guidance for residents and businesses during the pandemic please [**Click Here**](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/news/coronavirus-covid-19-what-you-need-to-know.aspx)