**Covid-19 Information Update Issue 13 (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 get complacent. We must continue to play our part to stop the spread. Thanks to the work of GP practices, hospitals, pharmacies and our larger vaccination sites, more than **750,000** people have received at least one vaccine dose in Hertfordshire and west Essex.

**AstraZeneca vaccine -** The UK’s Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has carried out a detailed review of reports of an extremely rare blood clotting problem affecting a small number of people who have had the AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccine. It's not yet clear why it affects some people, **but the risk is extremely low – around 4 people develop this condition for every million doses** of AZ vaccine given. You can read the latest guidance from Public Health England [**Click Here**](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/977653/PHE_COVID-19_AZ_vaccination_guide.pdf)

The COVID-19 vaccine can help stop you getting seriously ill or dying from coronavirus. For people aged 30 or over and those with health conditions which put them at particular risk from COVID-19, the benefits of being vaccinated significantly outweigh any risk of clotting problems. People are advised to continue to come forward for their vaccine and complete their course with the same vaccine they had for their first dose, unless they suffered serious side effects after their first dose.

For people under 30 without other health conditions, who are at lower risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19, it's currently advised that it's preferable to have an alternative to the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine when you are eligible.

**Roadmap out of lockdown -** Lockdown restrictions have continued to ease this week in line with Step 2 of the government’s roadmap out of lockdown. This means that **as of 12 April**, hospitality venues such as pubs and restaurants can reopen for outdoor service. It has also allowed for 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. 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. 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 **[Click Here](https://www.hct.nhs.uk/covid-19/covid-19-vaccination-site-opening-times-over-easter/)**

**Resources -** You can find information 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)

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**[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**](mailto: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)