**Covid-19 Information Update Issue 18 (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 know that in some areas, including nearby Bedfordshire, cases of a new variant of COVID-19 are present in communities. We must continue to play our part to stop the spread. Thanks to the work of GP practices, hospitals, pharmacies, our larger vaccination sites and thousands of volunteers, more than **One Million doses** have been given in Hertfordshire and West Essex so far.

**Roadmap update from 17 May**

As of 17 May, we have moved to Step 3 of the Government’s roadmap. This means that indoor hospitality can reopen, and indoor entertainment can resume, including cinemas, museums and children play areas. Up to 6 people or 2 households can meet indoors and up to 30 people outdoors. All holiday accommodation can open, including hotels and B&Bs, this can be used by groups of up to 6 or 2 households. We are reminded to continue following the rules of Hands, Face and Space. For more information about the changes [**Click Here**]((COVID-19)%20Coronavirus%20restrictions:%20what%20you%20can%20and%20cannot%20do%20-%20GOV.UK%20(www.gov.uk))

**Vaccination update – younger people now eligible**

Those aged 36 or over are now eligible to be vaccinated, and further progress through the age groups is expected soon. Everyone who is newly-eligible will either be contacted by their GP practice or can choose to ring 119 or go online through the [**National Booking Service**](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/) to select from a range of vaccination sites across the county.

**Updates to the National Booking Service**

The National Booking Service has been updated to offer appointments to those who are recommended to have an alternative to the AstraZeneca vaccine, in line with the latest JCVI guidance. This includes enabling pregnant women who are eligible because of their age or because they fall into a priority group to book appointments at a site that offers the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine, following a series of screening questions.

Pregnant women will be able to have a conversation with a healthcare professional at their vaccination appointment or can speak to their maternity team or GP service.

**Second doses – updated guidance**

The guidance around the timing of second doses changed on 14 May 2012 to help tackle rising cases of COVID-19 variants and provide the strongest possible protection from the virus at an earlier opportunity.

• **Those in the top 9 priority groups (aged 50+, residents in care homes for older adults, frontline health and care workers, people who are extremely clinically vulnerable, people with an underlying health condition):** The recommended interval between first and second doses has been reduced from 12 weeks to 8 weeks. People should continue to attend their second dose appointments as planned. Anyone who needs to bring their appointment forward will be contacted by the NHS.

**• People aged under 50** will continue to get their second dose 12 weeks after their first dose.  
People aren’t fully vaccinated until after the second dose, so it’s important for people to attend both their vaccination appointments.

**Rapid Testing - 1 in 3 people who catch Covid don’t display any symptoms, which means that the virus can be spread without realising it.** Rapid testing sites, designed to detect COVID-19 in people without symptoms, are offering ‘lateral flow tests’ across Hertfordshire. Now there’s no need to book – just walk in. You can also order rapid Covid testing kits to use at home or collect them from a local site or a pharmacy taking part in the lateral flow test scheme.

Twice weekly rapid testing enables us to find cases and prevent the spread of infection. Getting into the habit of twice weekly testing helps to keep our friends and family safe, and alongside the vaccination programme, will help ensure we can continue to ease our way out of lockdown.

For more information [**Click Here**](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/rapidtest)

**Remember, if you have COVID symptoms, you must get a ‘PCR’ test. Find out how to get a PCR test here:** [**www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test**](http://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test)

**Resources**

There is a huge amount of resources you can access to get the correct information on coronavirus and the vaccines. False information is often being shared online which can lead to some serious consequences. The government have created a [**SHARE checklist**](https://sharechecklist.gov.uk/) to help and protect you from false information online.

You can find more information about the vaccination programme, including FAQs and resources for adults with learning disabilities and resources in different languages and formats [**Click Here**](https://covid.healthierfuture.org.uk/information-and-resources)

Videos have been created by some of Hertfordshire’s Covid Information Champions in different languages about the coronavirus vaccine [**Click Here**](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgtazLRY5Zd-yrK9YZzsEukHC4SmQ4mO0)

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

Visit [**www.hertshelp.net**](http://www.hertshelp.net) email **info@hertshelp.net** or call **0300 123 4044**

For more information and guidance for residents and businesses during the pandemic please [**Click Here**](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/coronavirus)