

COVID19 (Coronavirus) and individuals who have Down's syndrome

July 2023

Our helpline and advocacy work has told us that people who have Down's syndrome were significantly affected by the COVID19 pandemic.

Additionally, data from the first wave of the pandemic, in 2020, showed that adults who have Down's syndrome were significantly more likely to become seriously unwell if they became infected with the virus and mortality rates were also much higher than for people in the general population, of a similar age, who did not have Down's syndrome.

In November 2020, people who have Down's syndrome were recognized as being Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) and were advised to take extra precautions to keep themselves safe from coronavirus.

During 2021 children and adults who have Down's syndrome were prioritized for early access to COVID19 vaccinations and subsequent boosters. These have proved to be very effective in giving people who have Down's syndrome protection against becoming seriously unwell, although vaccines do not stop people from becoming infected with COVID19.



In April 2021 the designation of COVID19 Clinically Extremely Vulnerable patient ceased.

From the spring of 2022, people who have Down's syndrome (aged 12 and over) were granted access to COVID antivirals, if they test positive for the virus. These antivirals, which need to be administered soon after a positive test result, have reduced the probability of people becoming seriously ill or dying from COVID19.

As we have moved out of the pandemic stage of COVID19 and restrictions have been removed, coronavirus has become something that we now 'live alongside' however, we know that COVID hasn't gone away and will remain a concern for many of the individuals and their families that we support in the time ahead.

Some key points to remember:

- People who have Down's syndrome may be invited for further COVID19 boosters, as recommended by the Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunizations (JCVI). In previous years, this programme has run alongside the autumn seasonal flu vaccination programme and people are advised to accept these offers of boosters when invited.
- People who have Down's syndrome are not generally considered to be immunosuppressed. Although people who have Down's syndrome have a weaker or less efficient immune system, they do not have a severely weakened immune system (unless they also have a blood cancer, are having chemotherapy or have had a bone marrow transplant). Evidence has shown that people who have Down's syndrome generally have a good immune response to the COVID19 vaccine. Only a small proportion of people who have Down's syndrome will therefore be invited for additional (spring) COVID19 boosters. If in doubt, a medical professional who cares for your loved-one who has Down's syndrome, such as their paediatrician, GP or a consultant can give additional advice.
- People who have Down's syndrome can still order free supplies of COVID19 testing kits – for details of how to order these, see the link to the nation of UK you live in (click on links below)

- People who have Down's syndrome aged 12 and over are eligible for COVID19 antivirals, if they test positive for COVID19. For details of how to access these, click the link to the nation of the UK you live in below.
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Useful links

- [COVID19 information in England](#)
- [COVID19 information in Wales](#)
- [COVID19 information in Northern Ireland](#)





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