

20th Dec. 2021

Deputy Louise O'Reilly,
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Issued via email to: louise.oreilly@oireachtas.ie

PQ Number: 59606/21

Question: To ask the Minister for Health if special arrangements will be made for those with underlying conditions to receive their booster vaccine from their general practitioners instead of at a vaccination centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy O'Reilly,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

The policy regarding the roll out of the additional doses of COVID-19 vaccine is determined by NIAC and the Department of Health.

Please note that as of 19th December, over 1.5m booster doses have been administered to eligible cohorts and almost 100k 3rd doses have been administered to immunocompromised individuals.

The purpose of the additional COVID-19 vaccine dose, as outlined by NIAC, is to address the following possible issues:

- Inadequate response to primary vaccine series
- Waning immunity following vaccination
- Reduced protection against variant(s) of concern

In light of the Omicron variant, NIAC recommends reducing the interval between the primary course and the booster dose to facilitate earlier protection. NIAC now recommends that people should be administered an mRNA booster vaccine after a minimum interval of three months in the order of priority as previously recommended. This means the time to complete an age cohort is dependent on the person's original vaccine completion date.


We are sequencing the rollout of the booster programme and prioritising cohorts as set out by NIAC. Therefore, whilst eligibility plays an important part in scheduling booster appointments, there may be a waiting period to ensure we broadly adhere to the NIAC priority sequence. We also have to factor in eligibility so we are commencing some cohorts in parallel to maximise capacity.

GPs who are participating in the Vaccination programme can also vaccinate medically vulnerable people. We would encourage people to take their first appointment offered from either a GP or vaccination centre. Both the GPs and vaccination centres are working through the high risk groups in priority order. We facilitated access to an appointment for medically vulnerable people through either vaccination centres or GPs to ensure these people receive their booster vaccine as soon as possible.

Given the uncertainty and potential risk of the Omicron variant the HSE has essentially opened up access to all channels to try and maximise the take-up and ensure we provide protection as early as possible to people, their families and wider society.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Damien McCallion". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Damien McCallion
National Director
National Lead Test & Trace and Vaccination Programme