

20th Dec. 2021

Deputy Paul Murphy,
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Issued via email to: paul.murphy@oireachtas.ie

PQ Number: 59692/21

Question: To ask the Minister for Health if his Department will ensure those over 50 years of age with underlying medical conditions can be vaccinated by their general practitioners as per the first two rounds of vaccination.

Dear Deputy Murphy,

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 the most vulnerable groups as set out by NIAC, with those aged 16-59 years with underlying medical conditions having commenced in late November and those aged 50-59 years commencing on 9th December. Once the GP is participating in the programme there is no issue with vaccinating a person over 50 years of age.

Please note that all vaccination channels will be open to individuals from all cohorts. Capacity is being created across all channels to offer an optimum number of appointments to complete each group as quickly as possible.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,



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