



PRESS RELEASE

No: 887/2021

Date: 29th November 2021

Booster vaccines keep immunity up

The GHA continues its booster campaign and is currently offering appointments for boosters to those in their 40s. Vaccines continue to be offered to those in the 12-15 age category who have been unable to take it before.

Gibraltar currently has the highest rate of boosters administered per capita than anywhere else in the world. The booster programme is proving very successful in Gibraltar, and this is evident in the very low numbers of cases in the older age groups who received the booster more than 2 weeks ago, compared to the numbers of cases in younger age groups who have not yet received a booster. The Pfizer booster is 94% effective after 14 days.

Studies show that immunity after vaccination decreases over time. It is likely that the local increase of cases in double vaccinated individuals is a result of this. Fortunately, the vaccine is working well at preventing the severe consequences of Covid-19; it is preventing severe illness and hospitalisations, and the overwhelming our healthcare services. Vaccinated individuals who catch COVID also have a much lower viral load, which means that they have a much lower chance of passing it on to others.

The Director of Public Health urges all those eligible to accept the offer of a COVID-19 booster vaccine. The side effects reported, though often unpleasant (sore arm, fever etc.), are usually short lived and are a good sign that the immune system is responding well to the vaccine.

On Friday the World Health Organisation designated the new variant B.1.1.529 a variant of concern, named Omicron. It is now more important than ever to ensure that you have the highest level of immunity possible by being fully vaccinated, including with a booster.

In other countries where people are not vaccinated (or unable to get access to a vaccine), they are experiencing more critical care admissions and more deaths. In Gibraltar, the vaccines are protecting us against the worst effects of COVID-19 and a booster is important to keep this immunity up.

Vaccination is particularly important for those who are vulnerable and at higher risk of suffering the worst outcomes of COVID-19. It takes at least 2 weeks following vaccination to see the necessary changes to our immune systems. Therefore, getting vaccinated early on in the winter season will ensure that as a community we have the best coverage.

Ministry of Health and Care

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To register your interest for vaccination please email Covid19@gha.gi or register your interest at <http://www.gha.gi/pfizerbooster/>

The Minister for Health, Samantha Sacramento, said: 'Don't let COVID-19 spoil your Christmas. Although it is still protecting against the worst effects of the disease, the immunity against COVID that the first doses of the vaccine provided throughout the summer is now wearing off and it is important to get a booster to keep immunity levels up. Please accept a booster when it is offered to you as this will be the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones this festive season.'

Note: If you have tested positive for COVID-19, please note you will need to wait a minimum of 12 weeks before you can receive a vaccine.

ENDS