

# WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR

**Issue Date: 1 September 2023**



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

**STATUS: COMPLIANCE / ACTION**

**CATEGORY: PUBLIC HEALTH**

**Title:** Vaccine Products to be used in the Autumn 2023 COVID-19 Vaccination programme

**Date of Expiry / Review:** N/A

**For Action by:**

Chief Executives, Health Boards/Trusts  
Immunisation Leads, Health Boards/Trusts  
Immunisation Coordinators, Health Boards  
Vaccination Operational Leads, Health Boards/Trusts  
Medical Directors, Health Boards/Trusts  
Directors of Primary Care, Health Boards/Trusts  
Nurse Executive Directors, Health Boards/Trusts  
Chief Pharmacists, Health Boards/Trusts  
Directors of Public Health, Health Boards/Trusts  
Directors of Maternity Services, Health Boards  
Directors of Workforce and Organisational Development, Health Boards/Trusts  
Executive Director of Public Health, Public Health Wales  
Nurse Director, Public Health Wales  
Head of Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme, Public Health Wales  
Director of Planning, Vaccination Programme Wales  
General practitioners  
Community pharmacists  
Digital Health and Care Wales

**For Information to:**

Welsh NHS Partnership Forum  
General Practitioner Council, Wales  
Royal College of GPs  
Royal College of Nursing  
Royal College of Midwives

British Dental Association  
Royal Pharmaceutical Society  
Community Pharmacy Wales  
Care Inspectorate Wales  
Chief Executive, Welsh Local Government Association for onward issue to:  
Directors of Social Services, Local authorities  
Directors of Public Protection, Local authorities  
Directors of Education, Local authorities  
Social Care Wales  
Health Education and Improvement Wales

**Sender:** Professor Chris Jones CBE, National Clinical Director, NHS Wales  
and Deputy Chief Medical Officer

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**Enclosure(s):** None.

Dear Colleagues,

Further to [WHC \(2023\) 029](#), I am writing to confirm the COVID-19 vaccine products to be deployed in Wales this winter. I am also providing you with revised instructions on the sequencing of offering vaccination to eligible groups in response to the emergence of a new COVID-19 variant.

Colleagues will be aware of the recent identification of a new variant (BA.2.86). While there is currently a great deal of uncertainty surrounding this new variant, there is clinical consensus across the UK nations that precautionary measures need to be considered. Clearly, our COVID-19 vaccination programme is a critical element of this.

**That is why, when the Winter Respiratory Vaccination Programme commences on 11 September 2023, the most vulnerable citizens should be prioritised for vaccination with currently available vaccines.**

Residents in a care home for older adults should be offered vaccination from the start of the programme, alongside the other most vulnerable groups as early as possible. This is consistent with the JCVI's advice that "the principle of timeliness should take priority over the choice of vaccine".

I appreciate that this instruction so close to commencement of the programme, with invitations for vaccination due to issue imminently, will cause disruption. However, with the opportunity still available to us to take precautionary action in response to the emergence of a concerning new variant, it would be remiss of us not to act, recognising our consistently stated priority of protecting the most vulnerable. Based on the limited evidence available to us on BA.2.86, it is possible that in 4-6 weeks we will be in a coronavirus wave, at which point it will be too late to act to prevent our NHS and care services being placed under even greater pressure.

I am truly grateful to you in advance for the action you will take in response to this instruction.

### Vaccine Products

After considering the JCVI's most recent advice on these matters, the vaccine products that can be used in Wales are as follows:

For all adult cohorts:

- Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA (Comirnaty) bivalent Original/Omicron BA.4-5 Dose 30 micrograms (licenced)
- Moderna mRNA (Spikevax) bivalent Original/Omicron BA.4-5. Dose 50 micrograms (licenced)
- Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna mRNA monovalent XBB vaccines (not yet licenced)

For young people aged 12 to 17 years:

- Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA (Comirnaty) bivalent Original/Omicron BA.4-5 vaccine. Dose: 30 micrograms (licenced)
- Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA monovalent XBB vaccine (not yet licenced)

For children aged 5 to 11 years:

- Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA monovalent XBB vaccine paediatric formulation (not yet licenced)

For children aged 6 months to 4 years:

- Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA monovalent XBB infant formulation (not yet licenced)

When mRNA COVID-19 vaccines are not considered clinically suitable, Sanofi/GSK AS03-adjuvanted monovalent beta variant (VidPrevtyn Beta) booster vaccine is a suitable alternative for adults aged 18 years and over.

The full advice from the JCVI can be found [here](#) .

### Supply

Currently available and licenced vaccines should be administered when the Winter Respiratory Vaccination Programme commences on 11 September 2023. Subject to licencing mRNA monovalent XBB vaccines will be available to Wales late September/ early October.

Vaccine ordering will be through Vaccination Programme Wales, adopting the updated COVID-19 vaccine Supply and Distribution Operating Guidance.

### Observation period for COVID-19 vaccines

From September 2023, the recommended observation periods in Wales are in accordance with the Green Book advice for all adults and children.

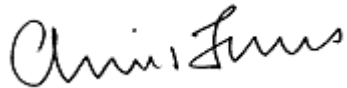
### Funding

Funding allocations have been communicated previously for the COVID-19 vaccination programme. I appreciate the challenging financial position organisations are facing; it is an extremely difficult time for the Welsh public sector and there is no sign of this pressure easing soon. I am aware that responding to the new variant may have implications for the savings plans of organisations. We will engage with organisations on this as the situation evolves.

I would like to apologise for the delay in sharing this vital information with the system. I can assure you every effort has been made to share this information at the earliest possible opportunity following the publication of the JCVI advice.

Once again, I would like to thank everyone who has worked so hard to prepare for the Winter Respiratory Vaccination Programme, which will play an integral role in keeping our citizens, our communities and our health and care services safe this winter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**YR ATHRO/PROFESSOR CHRIS JONES CBE  
DIRPRWY BRIF SWYDDOG MEDDYGOL / DEPUTY CHIEF MEDICAL  
OFFICER**