COVID-19 recovery

28th May 2021

**Title:** Vaccines highly effective against B.1.617.2 variant after 2 doses

Public Health England | 22nd May 2021

A new study by Public Health England shows for the first time that 2 doses of the COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective against the B.1.617.2 variant first identified in India.

The study found that, for the period from 5 April to 16 May:

* the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was 88% effective against symptomatic disease from the B.1.617.2 variant 2 weeks after the second dose, compared to 93% effectiveness against the B.1.1.7 variant
* 2 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine were 60% effective against symptomatic disease from the B.1.617.2 variant compared to 66% effectiveness against the B.1.1.7 variant
* both vaccines were 33% effective against symptomatic disease from B.1.617.2, 3 weeks after the first dose compared to around 50% effectiveness against the B.1.1.7 variant

The analysis included data for all age groups from 5 April to cover the period since the B.1.617.2 variant emerged. It included 1,054 people confirmed as having the B.1.617.2 variant through genomic sequencing, including participants of several ethnicities. Data published on Thursday 20 May for vaccine effectiveness covered the period since December for those aged over 65.

The difference in effectiveness between the vaccines after 2 doses may be explained by the fact that rollout of second doses of AstraZeneca was later than for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, and other data on antibody profiles show it takes longer to reach maximum effectiveness with the AstraZeneca vaccine.

Further detail: [Vaccines highly effective against B.1.617.2 variant after 2 doses](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/vaccines-highly-effective-against-b-1-617-2-variant-after-2-doses)

Full research: [Effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines against the B.1.617.2 variant](https://khub.net/documents/135939561/430986542/Effectiveness+of+COVID-19+vaccines+against+the+B.1.617.2+variant.pdf/204c11a4-e02e-11f2-db19-b3664107ac42) [preprint]

**Title:** Government launches new pilots to further support people to self-isolate

Department of Health and Social Care | 24th May 2021

The government is to launch 9 trailblazing pilots in England to test new, creative ways to help ensure people stick to self-isolation rules in areas with higher prevalence of infection including from new variants.

In partnership with local authorities, the government is backing the pilots with £12 million which will be used for a range of initiatives including providing alternative accommodation for people in overcrowded households, social care support such as increasing existing social care support for vulnerable adults and providing ‘buddying’ services for people whose mental health has been affected by lockdown and the variant outbreaks, and language communications support for individuals where English isn’t their first language. These pilots are designed to encourage people most at risk of catching and transmitting COVID-19 to come forward for testing and to self-isolate successfully if they test positive.

Full detail: [Government launches new pilots to further support people to self-isolate](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-new-pilots-to-further-support-people-to-self-isolate)

**Title:** Vaccine status drives over one million new users to the NHS App

Department of Health and Social Care | 23rd May 2021

Over 1.3 million new people have registered to use the NHS App since the addition of COVID-19 vaccine status was announced on 7th May. The app allows easy access to coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination status for travel and wider NHS services. Over 11,000 people have registered their preference for organ donation via the app in 4 days, 10 times more than average for that time. 90,000 people have ordered repeat prescriptions, saving clinicians and patients valuable time

The app, which now has over 4.8 million registered users, is one of the first internationally compliant systems in the world to demonstrate vaccine status. The COVID-19 vaccine status service allows users easily to show their proof of vaccine, if required for international travel, and has been designed in line with World Health Organisation (WHO) interim guidance.

Full detail: [Vaccine status drives over one million new users to the NHS App](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/vaccine-status-drives-over-one-million-new-users-to-the-nhs-app)

**Title:** Time use and mental health in UK adults during an 11-week COVID-19 lockdown: a panel analysis

The British Journal of Psychiatry | 12th May 2021

There is currently major concern about the impact of the global COVID-19 outbreak on mental health. But it remains unclear how individual behaviours could exacerbate or protect against adverse changes in mental health.

The aim of this paper was to examine the associations between specific activities (or time use) and mental health and well-being among people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data were from the UCL COVID-19 Social Study, a panel study collecting data weekly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analytical sample consisted of 55 204 adults living in the UK who were followed up for the 11-week strict lockdown period from 21 March to 31 May 2020.

Changes in time spent on a range of activities were associated with changes in mental health and well-being. Behaviours involving outdoor activities such as gardening and exercising predicted subsequent improvements in mental health and well-being, whereas increased time spent following news about COVID-19 predicted declines in mental health and well-being.

These results are relevant to the formulation of guidance for people obliged to spend extended periods in isolation during health emergencies and may help the public to maintain well-being during future lockdowns and pandemics.

Full paper: [Time use and mental health in UK adults during an 11-week COVID-19 lockdown: a panel analysis](https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/the-british-journal-of-psychiatry/article/time-use-and-mental-health-in-uk-adults-during-an-11week-covid19-lockdown-a-panel-analysis/8F07743CB011DCB181B8491FDD6514DE)

**Title:** How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted primary care?

The Health Foundation | 27th May 2021

Since the start of the pandemic the impact of COVID-19 on primary care, and those working within it, has been significant. Staff have been under considerable pressure to maintain services despite social distancing measures, adjusting to virtual consultations and helping to roll out the COVID-19 vaccine.

In April and May of 2020 – the first months of the UKs first lockdown – the number of appointments booked in general practice plummeted. This led to concerns about unmet need, particularly for people with long-term health conditions, and the potential for delayed diagnoses. However, consultation numbers recovered fast – and by September 2020 total consultations in general practice had recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

This article presents three charts, which explore the impact of the pandemic on primary care in more detail. The charts cover regional trends in the number of primary care appointments, trends in the number of primary care appointments with GPs and the shifting balance between face-to-face and phone appointments.

Key points

* In total, 31 million fewer primary care appointments were booked between April 2020 and March 2021 compared to the previous 12 months – a fall from 310 million to 279 million.
* London had the lowest drop in total number of appointments, with North East and Yorkshire, East of England and Midlands all seeing a drop in appointments twice as big percentage wise.
* The way that appointments take place has also shifted. March 2021 saw the highest ever number of telephone appointments in general practice; 11.4 million compared to 6.6 million in March 2020 and 3.5 million in March 2019. Between April 2020 and March 2021, 54% of appointments were face-to-face, compared with 79% in the previous year.

Full article: [How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted primary care?](https://www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/charts-and-infographics/how-has-the-covid-19-pandemic-impacted-primary-care)

See also: [Rising patient numbers threaten to overwhelm GPs](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-57229848) | BBC News

**Title:** Supporting recovery after long COVID

NHS Employers | 26th May 2021

NHS Employers have produced guidance on how organisations can work with line managers to support staff in recovery from long COVID.

The information, which was produced in partnership with NHS health and wellbeing leads, focuses on:

* facilitating a safe return to work for staff with long COVID
* working with your occupational health team to support staff
* supporting staff who are at work with long COVID
* supporting staff that are off sick with long COVID
* a range of good practice examples from NHS organisations that have supported staff with long COVID.

Full detail: [Supporting recovery after long COVID](https://www.nhsemployers.org/covid19/health-safety-and-wellbeing/supporting-staff-wellbeing/supporting-recovery-after-long-covid)

**Title:** Living and dying with covid-19 – an ethical perspective is vital

UK Pandemic Ethics Accelerator | 24th May 2021

With the worst of the pandemic behind us, even as our country starts to return to normal life, challenging ethical questions remain. How should we evaluate the decisions that were made in the first waves of the covid-19 pandemic? What decisions should we make now? And how should we respond to future pandemic threats?

For example, can there ever be an ethically acceptable level of deaths from an infectious threat, and how could such a thing be determined? Do we need to learn to live with covid-19? Do we need to change our ways of living to minimise future infections?

In considering many of these issues, the UK Pandemic Ethics Accelerator has published five ‘thought pieces’:

* [Living and dying with covid: The tough choices ahead](https://ukpandemicethics.org/living-and-dying-with-covid-the-tough-choices-ahead/)
* [Living and dying with covid: Not all deaths are equal](https://ukpandemicethics.org/living-and-dying-with-covid-not-all-deaths-are-equal/)
* [Living and dying with covid: Ethical complexity and health/health trade-offs](https://ukpandemicethics.org/living-and-dying-with-covid-ethical-complexity-and-health-health-trade-offs/)
* [Living and dying with covid: An ethics of counting for living with covid-19 deaths](https://ukpandemicethics.org/living-and-dying-with-covid-when-every-life-counts-equally-how-should-we-count-deaths/)
* [Living and dying with covid: Resolving the hard questions of living with covid-19 – the need for public deliberation](https://ukpandemicethics.org/living-and-dying-with-covid-resolving-the-covid-trilemma-the-need-for-public-deliberation/)

Full detail: [Living and dying with covid-19 – an ethical perspective is vital](https://ukpandemicethics.org/living-and-dying-with-covid-19-an-ethical-perspective-is-vital-press-release/)

See also: [Public debate is needed to decide how UK will live with SARS-CoV-2, says ethics collaborative](https://www.bmj.com/content/373/bmj.n1327) | BMJ

**Title:** Adult social care and COVID-19 after the first wave: assessing the policy response in England

The Health Foundation | 27th May 2021

This briefing analyses policies to support adult social care during the height of the second wave of the pandemic in January and February 2021, and in the months leading up to it. It provides a narrative summary of central government policies related to adult social care in different areas, such as policies on testing and support for the workforce. Also provided is a summary of the latest publicly available data on the impacts of COVID-19 on adult social care. In the final part, the briefing makes an assessment of the policy response since June 2020, consider how policies changed over time, and identify priorities for the future.

The authors argue that support in some areas improved after the first wave, such as access to testing and PPE, and the priority given to social care appeared to increase. However, they found that major challenges remained, policies in several areas continued to be slow, fragmented, and short-term, and gaps in the response risk increasing inequalities. Underlying structural issues – underfunding, workforce issues, fragmentation, and more – made the social care system vulnerable to a major shock.

The briefing identifies several priorities to help prepare for potential future waves of the virus. Short-term actions should include greater involvement of social care in planning and decision making, improved access to regular testing and PPE, and a commitment to cover the costs of local government’s COVID-19 response.

Full detail: [Adult social care and COVID-19 after the first wave: assessing the policy response in England](https://www.health.org.uk/publications/reports/adult-social-care-and-covid-19-after-the-first-wave?utm_campaign=12413252_Social%20care%202nd%20wave%20briefing%20%20%2028%20May%202021%20%20WARM&utm_medium=email&utm_source=The%20Health%20Foundation&dm_i=4Y2,7E24K,6ZKZT4,U05U3,1)

**Title:** Same-day SARS-CoV-2 antigen test screening in an indoor mass-gathering live music event: a randomised controlled trial

The Lancet Infectious Diseases | 27th May 2021

The banning of mass-gathering indoor events to prevent SARS-CoV-2 spread has had an important effect on local economies. Despite growing evidence on the suitability of antigen-detecting rapid diagnostic tests (Ag-RDT) for mass screening at the event entry, this strategy has not been assessed under controlled conditions. This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of a prevention strategy during a live indoor concert.

The study provides preliminary evidence on the safety of indoor mass-gathering events during a COVID-19 outbreak under a comprehensive preventive intervention. The data could help restart cultural activities halted during COVID-19, which might have important sociocultural and economic implications.

Full article: [Same-day SARS-CoV-2 antigen test screening in an indoor mass-gathering live music event: a randomised controlled trial](https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S1473-3099%2821%2900268-1)

**Title:** a New Deal for Surgery

Royal College of Surgeons of England | 28th May 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on NHS surgical services in England. All elective (planned) surgery was cancelled in the first wave and many surgical teams were redeployed to help treat COVID-19 patients.

Latest figures show the largest ever recorded NHS waiting list in England of 4.95 million people, including more than 430,000 waiting over a year. In addition, there is a ‘hidden waiting list’ of people who have not yet come forward or who have not yet been referred for hospital treatment. Estimates vary, but could mean the waiting list growing to a figure of 9.7 million by 2023/24.

This report highlights the challenges that exist and provides recommendations for recovery.

Full report: [A New Deal for surgery](file:///C:\Users\andrew.carrick\Downloads\7534%20%20RCS%20%20New%20Deal%20For%20Surgery_AW3_Web%20%20270521.pdf)

See also: [Surgery waiting times could be cut with specialist hubs, say surgeons](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-57277793)

**Title:** Mindfulness practice for protecting mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic

Translational Psychiatry | 28th May 2021

Emerging evidence shows that the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic is negatively affecting mental health around the globe. Interventions to alleviate the psychological impact of the pandemic are urgently needed. Whether mindfulness practice may protect against the harmful emotional effects of a pandemic crisis remains hitherto unknown.

The authors investigated the influence of mindfulness training on mental health during the COVID-19 outbreak in China. We hypothesized that mindfulness practitioners might manifest less pandemic-related distress, depression, anxiety, and stress than non-practitioners and that more frequent practice would be associated with an improvement in mental health during the pandemic.

The study found lower scores of pandemic-related distress in mindfulness practitioners compared to non-practitioners. In general, older participants showed fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety. In younger practitioners, pandemic-related distress decreased from peak to follow-up. Importantly, increased mindfulness training during the preceding two weeks was associated with lower scores of depression and anxiety at both assessments. Likewise, practice frequency predicted individual improvement in scores of depression, anxiety, and stress at follow-up.

The results indicate that mindfulness meditation might be a viable low-cost intervention to mitigate the psychological impact of the COVID-19 crisis and future pandemics.

Full article: [Mindfulness practice for protecting mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41398-021-01459-8.pdf)

**Title:** Pandemic Pressures: How Greater Manchester equalities organisations have responded to the needs of older people during the Covid-19 crisis

Ambition for Ageing | April 2021

This report summarises research into how Greater Manchester equalities organisations have responded to the needs of older people during the Covid-19 crisis. The report and supporting briefing highlight a number of recommendations for service commissioners, funders and contractors to contribute to future emergency planning and responses:

* Equalities organisations that work within and for particular communities of identity which experience marginalisation were on the frontline during the Covid-19 pandemic.
* Learning from the pandemic has shown that in order to mitigate against increasing inequalities in a crisis, service commissioners, funders and contractors must recognise and utilise the expertise of equalities organisations.
* The resilience of equalities organisations needs to be built on and supported to allow them to respond in a crisis.
* We need to learn from the experiences of equalities organisations during this pandemic not only to help in any future crises, but to tackle the widening of inequalities caused by this one.

Full report: [Pandemic Pressures: How Greater Manchester equalities organisations have responded to the needs of older people during the Covid-19 crisis](https://ambitionforageing.org.uk/sites/default/files/Pandemic%20Pressures%20Full%20Report_0.pdf)

**Title:** Regulatory approval of COVID-19 Vaccine Janssen

Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency | 28th May 2021

A single-dose Covid vaccine made by Janssen has been approved for use in the UK by the medicines regulator. The vaccine, which was 85% effective in stopping severe illness from Covid-19 in trials, has met expected safety standards.

Twenty million doses have been ordered for the UK, and will arrive later this year. It will be the fourth vaccine to be used in the UK to protect against Covid-19.

Further detail: [Regulatory approval of COVID-19 Vaccine Janssen](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-approval-of-covid-19-vaccine-janssen)

See also:

[One-dose Janssen COVID-19 vaccine approved by the MHRA](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/one-dose-janssen-covid-19-vaccine-approved-by-the-mhra) | Department of Health & Social Care

[Janssen single-dose Covid vaccine approved by UK](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-57283837) | BBC News

We

[TRFT Library & Knowledge Service](https://www.trftlibraryknowledge.com/) aim to bring together the latest guidelines, research and news on Covid-19 through our [Covid-19 portal](https://www.trftlibraryknowledge.com/coronavirus.html). For daily updates on Covid-19 visit our '[Latest Health](https://trfthealthweeklydigest.wordpress.com/)' newsfeed, or use the hashtag [#covid19rftlks](https://twitter.com/hashtag/covid19rftlks?src=hashtag_click) to see our latest tweets on Covid-19 research, guidelines and news.

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