

Key facts about vaccination and testing

Vaccination

The coronavirus can cause covid-19, a disease that can be life-threatening in the worst cases. Many people still suffer from health problems long after they have recovered from this disease. Along with observing the distancing and hygiene rules, and wearing a face mask, vaccination is the best protection against this disease. Vaccination is voluntary and costs you nothing. The vaccines used in Germany are safe and highly effective. They have passed an EMA (European Medicines Agency) approval procedure, and have been thoroughly tested.

At present, the amount of vaccine available is still not sufficient to vaccinate every citizen. The federal government has therefore introduced a prioritisation system to determine who can get vaccinated first.

The order of vaccination at a glance:

Group 1 – Top priority

- The over-80s
- People who are being treated, supervised or cared for, or who are working, in residential or semi-residential facilities or in residential groups receiving outpatient provision for treatment, supervision or care of elderly or care-dependent people.
- People who regularly perform protective vaccinations against coronavirus
- Care staff in outpatient care services and
- People who perform examinations and tests as part of outpatient care
- People who work in areas of medical facilities with a very high risk of exposure to coronavirus, particularly intensive care units, accident and emergency units, emergency services, specialist outpatient palliative care, vaccination centres and areas where aerosol-generating activities (e.g. bronchoscopy) are carried out
- People in medical facilities who regularly treat, supervise or care for people who have a very high risk of a severe or fatal disease progression after infection with coronavirus – particularly in oncology or transplant medicine, or in the course of treating severely immunosuppressive patients

Group 2 – High priority

- The over-70s
- People with Trisomy 21 or a thalidomide disability
- People who have just had an organ transplant
- People with forms of dementia or mental disability, or severe psychiatric illnesses (bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, severe depression)
- People with cancers requiring treatment
- People with severe chronic pulmonary diseases (e.g. interstitial lung disease, COPD, cystic fibrosis), muscular dystrophy or comparable neuromuscular diseases, diabetes mellitus with complications, liver cirrhosis or other chronic liver diseases, chronic kidney disease or obesity (with BMI over 40)
- People who, according to an individual medical evaluation, have a very high risk of a severe or fatal disease progression after infection with coronavirus because of specific circumstances in their individual case
- Up to two close contacts of care-dependent people who do not live in an institution, are over 70 years old, have just had an organ transplant, or who have one of the above diseases or disabilities
- Up to two close contacts of pregnant mothers
- People who work in residential or outpatient facilities for mentally or psychologically handicapped persons, or who regularly treat, supervise or care for mentally or psychologically handicapped persons as part of outpatient care duties
- People who work in areas of medical facilities with, or who practise a healthcare profession that involves, a high or increased risk of exposure to coronavirus, in particular doctors and staff with regular patient contact and staff at blood/plasma donation facilities or coronavirus testing centres
- Police and emergency personnel who are exposed to a high risk of infection, for instance at demonstrations This also includes soldiers who are exposed to a high risk of infection in the course of overseas deployment
- People who work for the German Federal Republic diplomatic service or the German Archaeological Institute at places of work with inadequate health provision and who are exposed to a high risk of infection as a result
- People who work overseas for German political institutes or organisations and institutions headquartered in the German Federal Republic involved in the areas of crisis prevention, stabilisation, post-conflict rehabilitation, development cooperation or foreign cultural and educational policy, or in international organisations as German citizens in places with inadequate health provision, and who are exposed to a high risk of infection as a result
- People who work in childcare facilities, in child daycare, in primary schools, specialist schools or special needs schools
- People who work in the public health service and whose role is particularly relevant to maintaining hospital infrastructure
- People who are housed in or work in refugee and homeless person facilities in particular, or in other aid facilities for the homeless or women's shelters
- People who regularly work with elderly or care-dependent people as part of support services for everyday life recognised by state law, in the sense of § 45a of Book Eleven of the social security statute book

Group 3 – Heightened priority

- The over-60s
- People with the following diseases in particular: cancers in remission not requiring treatment, immune deficiency or HIV infection, autoimmune diseases, rheumatological disorders, cardiac insufficiency, arrhythmia, stroke, asthma, chronic inflammatory bowel disease, diabetes mellitus without complications, obesity (BMI over 30)
- People who, according to an individual medical evaluation, have an increased risk of a severe or fatal disease progression after infection with coronavirus because of specific circumstances in their individual case
- Up to two close contacts of care-dependent people who do not live in an institution, are over 60 years old, or who have one of the above diseases
- People who are members of constitutional bodies or who work in particularly relevant positions in constitutional bodies, governments and administrations, who work for the police, customs service, fire service, disaster control including the Federal Agency for Technical Relief (Technisches Hilfswerk) or in law and justice, or who work overseas for the German diplomatic service, for German political institutes or organisations and institutions headquartered in the German Federal Republic involved in the areas of crisis prevention, stabilisation, post-conflict rehabilitation, development cooperation or foreign cultural and educational policy, or who work in international organisations as German citizens
- Election workers
- People who work in particularly relevant positions in facilities and enterprises forming part of critical infrastructure, in particular pharmacies, the pharmaceutical industry, burial services, the foodstuffs industry, water and energy supply, wastewater disposal and the waste industry, transport and traffic or information technology and telecommunications
- Employees who work in areas of medical facilities with a low risk of exposure to coronavirus, in particular laboratories, and staff who have no patient care responsibilities
- People who work in the food retail sector
- People who work in childcare and youth welfare facilities and services, or at schools which are not primary, specialist or special needs schools, and who have a significantly increased risk of infection with coronavirus because of their living or working circumstances

Group 4 – No priority

- All those who have little risk of suffering a severe covid-19 disease progression. These will be offered vaccination after the prioritised groups.
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If a person is entitled to be vaccinated, they can arrange an appointment by telephone or over the internet. In Lower Saxony, there is a vaccination centre in your area administered by your local council. You can get a vaccination there **after** you have **been given** an appointment for one.

You can also get vaccinated against coronavirus at doctor's surgeries However, at present only people who cannot come to a vaccination centre for health reasons are being vaccinated in this way. Doctors' surgeries contact patients in this regard. At present, you still cannot make an appointment at the doctor's surgery yourself.

The regional government has set up a telephone hotline which is available from Monday to Saturday from 8.00 in the morning until 8.00 in the evening. You can use it to make an appointment or put your name on a waiting list if you are now entitled to a vaccination. Your appointment details will then be sent to you automatically.

The telephone number is: 0800 99 88 665.

You can register for a vaccination appointment at any time online at www.impfportal-niedersachsen.de.

Here you can also put your name down on a waiting list or cancel an appointment. For example, if you are on the waiting list but have already been given a vaccination appointment by your family doctor, you should cancel your appointment. In this way, vaccination appointments at vaccination centres can be made available for other people entitled to them, who can then get vaccinated more quickly. A 'Cancel appointment/place on waiting list' function has been added to the vaccination portal for this purpose. If you want to cancel your appointment, you must first provide your telephone number. You will then be given a code. This code must be entered during the cancellation procedure which follows, along with your date of birth.

Testing

There is a range of tests that make it possible to determine whether someone is ill with coronavirus. This is important because people are not always aware if they are already carrying the virus, and may possibly infect others.

There are three types of test:

1. Those that must be carried out by medical staff, and which are usually performed in doctor's surgeries when it is suspected that you may have a coronavirus infection (PCR tests)
2. Those that specially trained staff can carry out (rapid antigen tests) and
3. Those you can do yourself at home (self-tests).

Rapid antigen tests are possible at many doctor's surgeries, test centres, pharmacies and dentist's surgeries. The Federal Government pays for at least one rapid antigen test for citizens per week. You can find out where you can get tested in your area either [here](#) (link to list of municipalities) or [here](#) (link to doctors' information provided by KVN).

Rapid antigen tests and self-tests provide additional security, but they do not give any absolute guarantee that you are not infected with the virus. Therefore, even if your test is negative, **please observe** the relevant regulations for protection against the virus.

Important: If you have **had** a rapid test and it is positive, at all costs **please** stay at home or go home directly. Call your family doctor at once. A PCR test must be carried out in any case. Only in this way can a **suspicion of coronavirus infection** be either confirmed or dismissed.