

**From the Chief Medical Officer
Dr Michael McBride**



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

www.health-ni.gov.uk

HSS(MD) 39/2021

FOR ACTION

Chief Executives HSC Trusts

*for onward cascade to Medical Directors, and Trust
Vaccine Leads*

Chief Executive, Public Health Agency and Health and
Social Care Board/NIAS *for onward cascade as
appropriate*

Assistant Director of General Medical Services, Health
and Social Care Board *for onward cascade to All General
Practitioners, GP Locums and Practice Staff
OOHs Medical Managers*

Assistant Director of Pharmacy and Medicines
Management, Health and Social Care Board *for onward
cascade to Community Pharmacies*

Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAST
BT4 3SQ

Tel: 028 9052 0563

Email: Michael.McBride@health-ni.gov.uk

Our Ref: HSS(MD) 39/2021

Date: 10 June 2021

PLEASE SEE ATTACHED FULL CIRCULATION LIST

Dear Colleague

CHANGE OF DOSE INTERVAL BETWEEN COVID-19 VACCINES

1. We are writing to you to advise that in response to the spread of the Delta variant of Coronavirus we are recommending that the current dose intervals between the COVID-19 vaccines should be shortened. This is based on updated advice from the independent experts at the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) who have considered the latest available evidence on the Delta (B.1.617.2) variant.
2. The Delta variant was first detected in India in March 2021 and while confirmed cases in Northern Ireland remain currently lower than other parts of the UK with little evidence of sustained community transmission this situation is likely to change rapidly as a consequence of increased intra CTA travel. Evidence has emerged to indicate that the variant is likely to become the dominant strain across the UK.

3. In preparation for this it is essential that we continue to vaccinate as many people as possible. There is now strong evidence that two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine are required to obtain maximum protection against the Delta variant. Therefore we are recommending that from the 14 June the dose interval between COVID-19 vaccines should be shortened to help protect the community from the increasing prevalence of this variant and others that may/will inevitably arise. The dose interval between COVID-19 vaccines will now be as follows:
 - Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine – dose interval should be 6 weeks;
 - Moderna vaccine (when it becomes available) - dose should be 6 weeks;
 - AstraZeneca Vaccine – dose interval should be 8 weeks.
4. For those who have already received their first dose, scheduled appointments for second doses should remain unaffected.
5. Thank you for your continued efforts and, as ever, we are hugely grateful for everything that you are doing to make the HSC-delivery of this programme the success that it is.

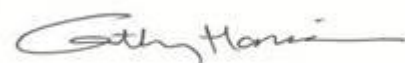
Yours sincerely



Dr Michael McBride
Chief Medical Officer



Professor Charlotte McArdle
Chief Nursing Officer



Mrs Cathy Harrison
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer

Circulation List

Director of Public Health/Medical Director, Public Health Agency (*for onward distribution to all relevant health protection staff*)

Director of Nursing, Public Health Agency

Directors of Pharmacy HSC Trusts

Director of Social Care and Children, HSCB

Family Practitioner Service Leads, Health and Social Care Board (*for cascade to GP Out of Hours services*)

Medical Directors, HSC Trusts (*for onward distribution to all Consultants, Occupational Health Physicians and School Medical Leads*)

Nursing Directors, HSC Trusts (*for onward distribution to all Community Nurses, and Midwives*)

Directors of Children's Services, HSC Trusts

RQIA (*for onward transmission to all independent providers including independent hospitals*)

Medicines Management Pharmacists, HSC Board (*for cascade to prescribing advisers*)

Regional Medicines Information Service, Belfast HSC Trust
Regional Pharmaceutical Procurement Service, Northern HSC Trust
Professor Donna Fitzsimons, Head of School of Nursing and Midwifery QUB
Professor Sonja McIlpatrick, Head of School of Nursing, University of Ulster
Caroline Lee, CEC
Donna Gallagher, Open University
Professor Paul McCarron, Head of School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, UU
Professor Colin McCoy, Head of School, School of Pharmacy, QUB
Professor Colin Adair, Director of the NI Centre for Pharmacy Learning and Development, QUB
Donncha O'Carolan, HSCB (*for distribution to all General Dental Practitioners*)
Raymond Curran, Head of Ophthalmic Services, HSCB (*for distribution to Community Optometrists*)
Trade Union Side
Clinical Advisory Team

This letter is available on the Department of Health website at
<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/professional-medical-and-environmental-health-advice/hssmd-letters-and-urgent-communications>