

Special Covid newsletter

28 June 2022



Covid infections are continuing to rise in the UK

The latest figures are from the [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\)](#). The data suggests about 1.7 million people were estimated to have Covid in the week ending 18 June.

This is about one in 35 people - an increase of 23% on the week before.

It's thought that two new fast-spreading subvariants of Omicron - called BA.4 and BA.5 - are likely to be driving new infections.

Covid rates for other countries of the UK were:

- One in 45 in Wales - the same as the previous week
- One in 30 in Northern Ireland - up from one in 45
- One in 20 in Scotland - up from one in 30

With these rising rates, our advice is to make sure you are fully vaccinated, which for blood cancer patients currently means five jabs. You can find out more [HERE](#)

We suggest that you should also remain vigilant, avoid crowded places if possible, and wear a face mask if you can't. FFP1, FFP2 and FFP3 masks are recommended. In general terms, the higher the number, the better the protection, but any mask is better than none.

If you catch Covid

If you have Covid symptoms, you should immediately take a **lateral flow or PCR test**. You will need a positive result to be assessed for treatment, which is usually needed within about five days. You can find the procedure to follow on the NHS website [HERE](#)

Guidance from the NHS, effective from 13 June 2022, for treatment of Covid patients at home is as follows:

- First-line: nirmatrelvir plus ritonavir (antiviral) OR sotrovimab (nMAB), as clinically indicated
- Second-line: remdesivir (antiviral)
- Third-line: molnupiravir (antiviral)

Note that you should be monitored after your first treatment as you may need follow up treatment if your Covid symptoms return, or you continue to test positive.

Our position on Evusheld

Evusheld is a drug for Covid-19, which is designed to prevent Covid infections. This is different from the treatments currently available, like Paxlovid and sotrovimab, which are taken after someone catches Covid. Evusheld is given by injection, usually followed up by another jab several months later.

Evusheld is already available in countries like the United States, Canada, France, and Israel, although in some regions within these countries it can still be difficult or impossible to access.

The treatment is approved for use in the UK, but has not been made available to patients. We know that this is a concern for many blood cancer patients, and we have been working with other blood cancer charities to see how we can push the Government to make it available to immunosuppressed people.

If it's been approved in the UK, why isn't it available yet?

The clinical data on Evusheld's effectiveness was gathered before the emergence of the Omicron subvariants BA.1 and BA.2, and the latest variants BA.3 and BA.4. and for some time it was unclear whether the drug would still be effective. However, there's emerging evidence that Evusheld may help prevent immunocompromised people becoming seriously ill.

After reviewing the available evidence, our position is that Evusheld should be made available for people who are not likely to mount any effective response to vaccines. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), however, tells us that they will not buy doses of Evusheld until the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has conducted lab-based research on its effectiveness against Omicron.

It should be noted, however, that, in common with many drugs, Evusheld may not be suitable for all patients, and will be subject to a review of any other health risks patients may have.

What is CLL Support doing?

The research on Evusheld is reportedly ongoing. We have joined with other cancer and blood cancer charities to ask the Government to be totally transparent about when a decision will be made about whether to buy Evusheld, and how the decision will be made. We also want to understand what the UKHSA research is showing. So far, we have received no reply.

So, we are calling on the Government to set out a clear plan and timeline, including the criteria they are using to review Evusheld, and how they will determine eligibility.

What can I do to help?

We would like to request your help with this. Blood Cancer UK have written a template letter that you can use to send to your MP asking them to write to the Secretary of State. You can find it [HERE](#)

This is just a template, and you can adapt it if you wish.

You can find out who your local MP is and their contact details using the [find your MP website](#).

This is the full information we have right now, if and when we hear any updates we will pass them on to you.

Remember, you can email us on: membership@cllsupport.org.uk or call on [0800 977 4396](tel:08009774396)

Or Blood Cancer UK on: support@bloodcancer.org.uk or call on [0808 2080 888](tel:08082080888).

