

Covid-19 vaccination: medical exemption certificates guidance



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As part of the GP contract update ([The National Health Service \(General Medical Services Contracts and Personal Medical Services Agreements\) \(Amendment\) \(No. 2\) Regulations 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)) from October 2021, GPs became required to action requests from patients regarding Medical Exemption Certificates for Covid vaccination and testing.

This contract change has been imposed on practices by the Department of Health and Social Care and Londonwide LMCs acknowledges the concerns raised by practices regarding the workload implications and potential for abuse from patients. However, the BMA General Practitioners Committee have negotiated with NHS England that practices should receive £44 per assessment, which should be paid regardless of the outcome of the assessment. Much of this work should be completed by a patient's specialist (where they have one) as reasons for exemptions are rare, although some requests are likely to come to the patient's GP. The full BMA guidance can be [viewed here](#).

According to national guidance, individuals may request evidence of exemption to:

- Work or volunteer in a CQC-regulated care home from 11 November 2021.
- Be exempt from self-isolating for 10 days if they are a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case.
- Be exempt from self-isolation and testing regimes for non-Red List countries when such requirements are in force.
- Enter a venue in England that requires the NHS COVID Pass as a condition of entry. From 15 December 2021 showing an NHS COVID Pass became [a legal requirement for entry into certain large events](#). Unvaccinated people can also access their pass if they have recorded a recent clear lateral flow device or PCR test.

The Department of Health and Social Care has [published guidance for clinicians](#) which they can use when assessing whether patients have a valid medical reason for exemption. It is anticipated that there are limited circumstances in which a patient would potentially meet the threshold for exemption, and the following list is not meant to be exhaustive:

- Patients who are receiving end of life care where vaccination is not in the individual's interests.
- Patients with learning disabilities or autistic individuals, or with a combination of impairments which result in the same distress, who find vaccination and testing distressing because of their condition and cannot be achieved through reasonable adjustments such as provision of an accessible environment.
- Those with medical contraindications to the vaccines such as:
 - severe allergy to all Covid-19 vaccines.
 - those who have had adverse reactions to the first dose (e.g. myocarditis).

Further information regarding contraindications to the different vaccines can be found in the [Covid-19: the green book, chapter 14a](#).

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According to national guidance, there is also the option to provide time limited exemptions which may be used in the following circumstances:

- Short term medical conditions.
- Pregnant women. However, where women choose to exempt themselves they are encouraged to use their MATB1 certificate as proof rather than apply for an exemption certificate. National guidance still recommends women receive their covid vaccine during pregnancy due to increasing evidence of the adverse outcomes of covid infection for the mother and baby and reassurance around the safety of the vaccine. Further information is available on the [RCOG website](#) which should be helpful when counselling pregnant and breastfeeding women.

NHS Digital have published further guidance ([Summary Care Record application \(SCRa\) COVID-19 Exemptions Information](#)) on the role of the clinician in the process, with details of how to access the Summary Care Record Application (SCRa) through the Spine Portal. The pathway is outlined as below.

Further patient-facing guidance is [available on the government website](#). There is no appeal process if patients are unhappy with the outcome of the assessment, and it is anticipated that this may cause patient frustrations. It will be helpful to outline to patients that clinicians are following strict exemption criteria and in most instances these applications should be completed by their specialist where they have one.

Londonwide LMCs has produced [this template letter](#) to send to patients who approach a practice about getting an exemption certificate, directing them to 119.

If you receive any complaints or are experiencing challenge from patients regarding refusal of medical exemption certificates, we recommend getting in touch with your MDO or our GP Support team: gpsupport@lmc.org.uk.

