

Dear Colleague

UPDATE ON THE HIGHEST RISK LIST IN SCOTLAND

I am very grateful for all you have done for patients on the Highest Risk List (previously known as the 'Shielding List'). I write with some updates regarding the people who are at the highest risk from Covid.

1. The current position of the highest risk group

With more people getting protection from Covid through vaccination, we do not expect a widespread return to shielding in the future. This is true even with the emergence of the Omicron Variant of Concern.

As at 20 December 2021, 96.7% of those eligible on the Highest Risk List have received one dose of the vaccine, 95.4% have received two doses, and 85.7% have received a third dose or booster dose. 87.9% of those identified as severely immunosuppressed have received their third dose and will soon be eligible for a booster dose, if not already booked.

We are still asking everyone on the Highest Risk List to follow the same advice as the general population – wearing face coverings, following hygiene and ventilation guidance. We are encouraging people to work from home if they can, and to regularly perform Lateral Flow Tests, and to encourage other households to do the same before meeting up.

2. Maintaining the Highest Risk List

At this time of uncertainty around Omicron, combined with the usual pressures of winter, it is important to maintain the Highest Risk List. While we are currently asking people on the List to follow the same advice as the rest of the population, this could change quickly, and we may need to

**From the Chief Medical
Officer
Professor Gregor Smith**

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Addresses

For action

Chief Executives,
NHS Boards Medical Directors,
NHS Boards Primary Care Leads,
NHS Boards Directors of Nursing &
Midwifery,
NHS Boards Chief Officers of
Integration Authorities
Chief Executives, Local Authorities
Directors of Pharmacy
Directors of Public Health
General Practitioners
Practice Nurses
Immunisation Co-ordinators
Operational Leads
Shielding Co-ordinators

For information

Chair, NHS Boards
Infectious Disease Consultants
Consultant Physicians
Chief Executive, Public Health
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ask people to follow additional measures, or to provide them with services and further support, as we have in the past.

Please, therefore, continue to add newly identified patients to the Highest Risk List, and remove those who no longer need to be in this group. This can form part of routine appointments. Based on recent months, the majority of additions to the list have come in bulk from cancer centres, with only a small number being added by clinicians or GPs. More information and guidance on additions and removals is available in Annex A.

3. Those who are moderately immunosuppressed

We know there are many people who are moderately immunosuppressed because of their treatment or medication, who do not meet the criteria for someone who is at 'Highest Risk' from Covid. The evidence suggests that these people are likely to still be at moderate risk of more severe outcomes if they do catch the virus while their immune systems are suppressed. We want to make sure these people understand their risk, and the impact of the medications they are prescribed.

I am therefore asking you, going forward, to discuss these risks with your patients, to advise them to continue to take extra care and follow the protective measures, including good hand hygiene and wearing a mask if they can. You will know your patients' condition best and can provide advice that is person-centred and addresses their individual needs.

I am also asking pharmacists to remind patients when dispensing immunosuppressive medication to take extra care to follow protective measures, to help keep these in mind.

Thank you again for all you have done, and continue to do.

Yours sincerely

Gregor Smith

Professor Gregor Smith
Chief Medical Officer