



**‘We all need to do our part to bring the country and life back to normal’ - Rustie Lee**

***Rustie Lee talks about having her vaccination even though she is a ‘big baby’ when it comes to injections***

TV personality, chef, actress and singer Rustie Lee has teamed up with Age UK Buckinghamshire to highlight the importance of the covid-19 vaccination for older people, especially those in Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities.

The NHS has done an incredible job so far in giving the first dose of the vaccination to over 24 million people. Worryingly though, the official figures show that across the UK only 7 in 10 eligible Black older people and around 8 in 10 eligible Asian older people have been vaccinated so far, compared to more than 9 in 10 eligible white older people.[[1]](#endnote-1)

These differences are a worry because we know that Black and Asian older people are more likely to test positive for Covid-19 and to become seriously ill and die from the virus.

Rustie, star of morning and reality TV, is working with Age UK to encourage older people and those from Black and other Minority Ethnic groups to have the vaccination. She said: ‘’I believe that by now you must all be as fed up with the lock down as I am. No leisurely shopping, no cinemas, no trips to the pub to meet up with friends for a drink and a meal, no visits from anyone, not even your family and, as of now, no concrete end yet in sight.

“We all need to do our part to bring the country and life back to normal. That is why I was happy to have my first jab at the start of the month. Trust me, I am a baby when it comes to having injections. I wind myself up for days for the annual flu jab. But this time it was different. I had to do this not only to protect myself but my family and everyone I might get in contact with.

“So, when I arrived at the vaccination centre I was glad to see how professional all the staff were. And not just professional, but genuinely nice. The nurses took their time to answer my questions and when it came to the injection I felt absolutely nothing. I was surprised how quickly it was over.

“It is now about three weeks since my jab and I can honestly say that I’ve had no complications or side effects.

“I would ask anyone, especially my Caribbean people to go and get vaccinated as soon as you can. We lost a lot of lives during this pandemic and we now have the chance to end this. So please do your part to help.‘’

There are a number of reasons why people may not have taken up the offer of a vaccination. Research shows these range from worries about safety and side-effects to doubts about how effective the vaccines really are. Some have been put off by myths and misinformation spreading on social media, but scientific evidence shows the vaccines are both safe and highly effective in reducing the chances of everyone, including older age groups, becoming seriously unwell with coronavirus. It’s important for people to get reliable information from trustworthy sources so they can make an informed choice. This is especially important for anyone whose work brings them into contact with others or who lives with someone in this situation, for example, transport, security, nursing or care.

Some people have also experienced practical challenges in getting to centres. However, there are now a variety of ways to access a vaccine and, at the moment, anyone over the age of 60 can book directly though the website or by calling 119, as well as by responding to an invitation from their local GP.

Caroline Oakes, Communications Officer for Age UK in Buckinghamshire, said: “Getting vaccinated really is the best way to protect ourselves, our loved-ones and the wider community from this horrible virus. We are getting more information all the time about just how effective these vaccines are in keeping people safe and well, and in stopping the spread, and it is all really encouraging”

“Many older people and families have had to live with the fear of contracting this virus or taking it home to their friends and relatives. After such a hard year, vaccination can start to lift that burden – but only if we take up the offer when it’s made to us. We now know that anyone having a vaccination will have a good level of protection from three weeks after the first dose, and then the second booster dose further increases the level of protection and helps to sustain it for longer.

“Everyone involved in the vaccination programme, plus your local GP and practice nurse, is there to answer any questions or talk about any worries you might have. When you receive your invitation from the NHS though I do urge you to make an appointment and go along. I really don’t think you will regret it.“

**Notes to editors**

Data for 80+ and/or 70-79 (stats in table below).

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|  | 70-79 | 80+ |
| White | 94% | 95% |
| Black | 64% | 67% |
| Asian | 81% | 81% |

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| Data collected in December and January showed: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/datasets/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsongreatbritainattitudestovaccines>

14% of people from ethnic minorities said that they were fairly or very unlikely to have a coronavirus vaccination if it was offered to them, compared to 7% of white people. Of those ethnic minority people who said they were fairly or very unlikely to have the vaccine the following were the most common reasons cited:

Being worried about the side effects 64%

Being worried about the long-term effects on health 53%

Thinking the vaccination might not be safe 41%

I would wait to see how well the vaccination works 46%

Age UK polling

From 15 January-23 February Age UK heard from over 3000 older people about their experiences of getting the vaccine, Nearly 95% of people we heard from had a good or very good experience. The following are anonymous quotes from older people about their experiences:

* Absolutely well organised and I was in and out without any waiting. Just had to rest for 15 minutes to make sure that all was well with me. I give ‘the powers that be’ 100% praise.
* I received a phone call Sunday 17th Jan, vaccinated Tuesday 19th Jan. THANK YOU ALL a simply wonderful experience. NHS staff and volunteers were all very kind, friendly, helpful and were doing so much to keep everyone safe.
* NHS rang me, gave choice of day and time for my appointment. All staff and volunteers at vaccination centre, efficient, helpful and friendly. Am grateful to them all and the Gov for implementing the vaccine program so promptly particularly as I live in a very rural location.
* We were phoned by our surgery to arrange an appointment and went along on the designated day and everything ran like clockwork - excellent service. Can't wait for 2nd jab!
* The process was arranged perfectly. My wife and I enjoyed it. Everyone, including or probably especially the volunteers, was so caring and attentive. I can't say that I have often seen so many smiling people together.   
   I was very impressed by the whole thing from the telephone call for my appointment, right through the whole experience. It was so professionally carried out that it was actually enjoyable. The NHS is the best in the world!!
* Booking on the mobile was easy and efficient. The feeling of acute relief was palpable at the vaccination session. There were delays - nobody cared - this is our route to freedom and a return to normal life. Whole thing took just an hour.
* Both my husband and I were vaccinated at our local surgery. The ushers were all ex-service personnel and we found it very moving. Our usher was an ex-Beefeater! The team were working from 8am until 8pm.We felt extremely grateful to receive it.
* She was very anxious to get her appointment, but once booked she was happier. The actual experience on the day was exemplary. Access was good, adequate directions and parking. Plenty of marshals. Covid-secure venue, good hygiene facilities. Again plenty of marshals to direct us. All staff friendly, polite and very patient with her.Any questions answered clearly.

1. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)