



DR DAN POULTER MP

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Content from Dr Dan Poulter MP

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I'm sure many of us have very much enjoyed being able to see family, friends and loved ones over the Easter weekend – in some cases, for the first time in many months, as some of the restrictions began to lift on 29th March. From 12th April non-essential retail can open, pubs and hospitality venues can serve food and drink outdoors, outdoor attractions will be open to visitors and overnight stays at self-catering accommodation can also resume.

We have come such a long way in the fight against coronavirus and there is now most definitely light at the end of the tunnel, but for now we must continue to follow the rules as we tentatively start to emerge from lockdown. It only takes three or four weeks, particularly with some of the more virulent strains that have emerged, for things to get out of hand.

Vaccinations are the only way out of this pandemic. Our vaccination effort here in Suffolk is outstanding, with the county consistently being rated top for its role in vaccinating Suffolk residents. However, some people remain hesitant to have their vaccine - if people are not vaccinated, a reservoir of Covid may remain in the wider population and this potentially increases the chances of the virus mutating. In this case, if the virus mutates, there is a chance that vaccines will become less effective. Getting vaccinated is everybody's business and responsibility and I would therefore urge everyone to get vaccinated as soon as is practicably possible.

At this stage, we don't yet know if people will require a booster vaccination every year, a little like the annual 'flu jab, but we do know that the very elderly and those with suppressed immune systems may need boosters in any case as the vaccines may be slightly less effective in this group. For anyone considering potentially not having the vaccine, please remember that we all have a responsibility to protect our friends, family and neighbours who may be more vulnerable than we are.

In encouraging people to have their vaccination, it is vitally important to dispel some of the dangerous myths and falsehoods which are currently circulating around vaccine safety. All of the current evidence suggests that the Covid vaccines are safe. I understand that some of the information which is currently found on social media can be worrying, but I would advise everyone to check on the NHS website for the real facts, before perhaps inadvertently passing on or relying on information that might not be true. Vaccines are the best way to protect yourself and those around you from COVID-19. The vaccine can save lives.

With warmer weather ahead we know that transmission outdoors is reduced, and I remain cautiously optimistic that if we continue to stick with it and follow the guidance, we can all look forward to much happier times ahead.