COVID-19 vaccination

A guide for children and young people

This leaflet explains the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination programme for eligible children and young people.

What is COVID-19 or coronavirus?

COVID-19 is a very infectious respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Very few children and young people with COVID-19 infection go on to have severe disease.

There is no cure for COVID-19 although some newly tested treatments do help to reduce the risk of complications.

The health service is offering COVID-19 vaccine to children and young people aged 12 to 17 years. Young people at greater risk from serious illness if they catch COVID-19 or living with someone who has a severely weakened immune system will need 2 doses of the vaccine, 8 weeks apart. All other young people aged 12 to 17 will be offered 2 doses of vaccine 12 weeks apart.

Am I at risk from COVID-19 infection?

Coronavirus can affect anyone. Some children and young people are at greater risk including those living with serious conditions such as:

- cancers (such as leukaemia or lymphoma)
- diabetes
- serious heart problems
- chest complaint or breathing difficulties, including poorly controlled asthma
- kidney, liver or a gut disease
- lowered immunity due to disease or treatment (steroid medication, chemotherapy or radiotherapy)
- an organ transplant
- a neurodisability or neuromuscular condition
- a severe or profound learning disability
- Down's syndrome
- a problem with your spleen, eg sickle cell disease, or you have had your spleen removed
- epilepsy
- serious genetic problems
- other serious medical conditions as advised by your doctor or specialist.

For most children and young people COVID-19 is usually a milder illness that rarely leads to complications. For a very few the symptoms may last for longer than the usual 2 to 3 weeks. The vaccination will help to protect you against COVID-19.

You will be offered the Pfizer vaccine, which is licensed for children and young people.

Will the vaccine protect me?

The COVID-19 vaccination will reduce the chance of you suffering from COVID-19 disease. It may take a few weeks for your body to build up some protection from the vaccine. You should get good protection from the first dose. Having the second dose should give you longer lasting protection against the virus.

Like all medicines, no vaccine is completely effective – some people may still get COVID-19 despite having a vaccination, but this should be less severe. Further information is available on symptoms on nidirect.gov.uk/coronavirus.

The vaccines do not contain organisms that grow in the body, and so are safe for children and young people with disorders of the immune system. These people may not respond so well to the vaccine but it should offer them protection against severe disease.

What about giving consent?

You will probably want to share information about the vaccine with your parents and discuss it together.

If you are being offered the vaccination at school, you may be given a consent form that your parent/guardian should sign giving permission for you to have the vaccination.

The person giving you the vaccine will answer any questions you may have about the vaccine at your appointment.

Common side effects

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. Most of these are mild and short term, and not everyone gets them. With the vaccine we use in under-18s, side effects are more common with the second dose.

Very common side effects include:

- having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection. This tends to be worst around 1 to 2 days after the vaccination

- feeling tired

- headache

- general aches, or mild flu like symptoms

You can rest and take paracetamol (follow the dose advice in the packaging) to help make you feel better. Although feeling feverish is not uncommon for 2 to 3 days, a high temperature is unusual and may indicate you have COVID-19 or another infection. Symptoms following vaccination normally last less than a week. If your symptoms seem to get worse or if you are concerned, you or your parents can phone your GP or Out of Hours service.

Less common side effects

Recently, cases of inflammation of the heart (called myocarditis or pericarditis) have been reported very rarely after COVID-19 vaccines.

Most of these cases have been in younger men and usually a few days after the second vaccination. Most people recovered and felt better following rest and simple treatments.

You should seek medical advice urgently if you experience:

chest pain

shortness of breath

feelings of having a fast-beating, fluttering, or pounding heart

Keep your record card safe

If you or your parents or carers do seek advice from a doctor or nurse, make sure you tell them about your vaccination (show them the vaccination card, if possible) so that they can assess you properly.

Don't forget your COVID-19 vaccination

COVID-19 vaccine

Make sure you keep this record card with you

For more information on the COVID-19 vaccination or what to do after your vaccination, see www.nidirect.gov.uk/covid-vaccine

DoH
www.health-ni.gov.uk

COVID-19 immunisation
Protect yourself.

HSC Health and Social Care

You or your parents and carers can also report suspected side effects to vaccines and medicines online through the Yellow Card scheme.

coronavirus-yellowcard. mhra.gov.uk

Can I catch COVID-19 from the vaccine?

You cannot catch COVID-19 from the vaccine but it is possible to have caught COVID-19 and not have the symptoms until after your vaccination appointment. The most important symptoms of COVID-19 are recent onset of any of the following:

- a new continuous cough
- a high temperature
- a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell

If you have the symptoms above, stay at home and arrange to have a test.

What should I do next?

After your vaccine keep your record card safe. Your record card will show the details of your first dose. You will be offered a second dose after 8 or 12 weeks.

You will be advised on the right timing for your second dose to help give the best and longest lasting protection for you.

What if I am not well when my appointment is due?

You should not attend a vaccine appointment if you are self-isolating or waiting for a COVID-19 test. You should wait 12 weeks after having a positive COVID-19 test or at least 4 weeks if you are at higher risk.

How is COVID-19 spread?
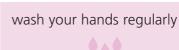
COVID-19 is spread through droplets breathed out from the nose or mouth, particularly when speaking or coughing.

It can also be picked up by touching your eyes, nose and mouth after contact with contaminated objects and surfaces.

You MUST still follow any national or local restrictions and:

where advised wear a face covering

wash your hands regularly

open windows to let fresh air in

follow the current guidance

www.nidirect.gov.uk/coronavirus

Further information

You or your parents should read the product information leaflet for more details on your vaccine, including possible side effects, on the Coronavirus Yellow Card website.

You can also report suspected side effects on the same website or by downloading the Yellow Card app: **coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra. gov.uk/productinformation**

Further information is available from **pha.site/covid-vaccine-schools**

This information was originally developed by UK Health Security Agency and is used under the Open Government Licence v3.0

HSC Public Health Agency

Public Health Agency
12-22 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BS.
Tel: 0300 555 0114 (local rate).
www.publichealth.hscni.net

Find us on: