COVID-19 vaccinations

A guide for parents of children aged 5 to 11 years of age at high risk

Who is at higher risk from COVID-19 infection?

Children at serious risk from the complications of COVID-19 infection include those with:

- severe neurodisabilities
- immunosuppression* – those whose immune systems don't work as well and those who live with someone who is immunosuppressed
- profound and multiple or severe learning disabilities
- being on the learning disability register
- those with Down's syndrome
- those with long term serious conditions affecting their body. Your GP will know if they need to have the vaccine

The vaccine is also recommended for those children living with people who have a weakened immune system (who are immunosuppressed). This is to reduce the risk of them passing on the infection to their family members.

All these children and young people who are aged 5 to 11 years of age should have the COVID-19 vaccinations.

*Children with very severely weakened immune systems, may need an extra (third) dose from 8 weeks after their second dose.

What is COVID-19 or coronavirus?

COVID-19 is a very infectious respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Most children who get COVID-19 have no symptoms. Those that do, have mild symptoms like a bad cold.

A few children and young people will get very poorly and have to go to hospital.

About the vaccine

Children will be offered the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. Each vaccine is a third of the dose of vaccine that is given to older children and adults.

Your child needs 2 injections of the vaccine usually 8 weeks apart. The vaccine has been tested to make sure it is as safe as possible.

Knowing if your child should have a vaccine

Your GP (family doctor) or specialist should advise you about the COVID-19 vaccinations for your child.

Some parents may receive a letter, or a phone call to invite them for to make an appointment for their child to be vaccinated.

Can you give the COVID-19 infection to anyone after you have had the vaccine?

Having the vaccine makes your child less likely to get very ill from COVID-19. It will help to stop them from catching and passing on the virus.

Common side effects

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. Most of these are mild and short-term and not everyone gets them.

The very common side effects should only last a day or two. The Pfizer vaccine tends to cause more side effects after the second dose than the first dose.

Common side effects include:

- their arm feeling heavy or sore where they had the injection
- feeling achy or like they have the flu
- feeling tired
- having a headache

If they feel feverish (like they are very hot or very cold) they should:

- rest
- take paracetamol (please check that the dose and type of paracetamol is correct for their age)
- you can find more information on paracetamol here **www.nhs.uk/medicines/paracetamol-for-children**

They should feel better in less than a week.

Rare but serious side effects

Worldwide, there have been recent, rare cases of inflammation of the heart reported after the adult dose of COVID-19 vaccines.

These cases have been seen within a few days of vaccination.

Most people felt better after a few days of simple treatment.

> You should seek medical advice urgently if your child experiences:
>
> - chest pain
> - shortness of breath
> - feelings of having a fast-beating, fluttering or pounding heart
>
> If you are worried about your child call 111 or go to the 111 website. Make sure you tell them about the vaccine, or show them your child's record card.

If you think they have had a serious side effect from the vaccine you can report it using the Coronavirus Yellow Card scheme. See back page.

How to book your appointment

If you receive an invitation letter, it will explain how to make the appointment for your child.

They may be offered it by their specialist in clinics but if not you can call the National Booking Service on 119 to make an appointment.

You will get told where to go for your child's vaccinations and when.

What to do next

When your child has had their first injection, you should get a record card. You should keep this card and bring it with you when taking your child for their next appointment.

This will be in 8 to 12 weeks time.

Although the first dose will give them good protection, they will need the second dose to get longer-lasting protection.

Keep their card safe and make sure you take your child to get their second injection.

How long does the vaccine take to work?

It can take a few weeks for the vaccine to protect your child.

Does the vaccine work for everyone?

The vaccine doesn't completely stop everyone getting COVID-19, but if they do, it should still stop them from being very poorly.

What to do if your child is not well when it is their next appointment

Your child should not attend a vaccine appointment if they are self-isolating, waiting for a COVID-19 test or you are unsure if they are fit and well.

If your child has tested positive for COVID-19, you should wait 4 weeks from the test for your child to have their first or second vaccine.

After the vaccine

You and your child should still try to avoid catching COVID-19 infections by:

- following current advice on wearing a face mask
- meet outdoors or if indoors, let fresh air in
- wash your hands carefully and often
- follow the current guidance (**gov.uk/coronavirus**)

Signs of COVID-19

- a new and persistent cough
- a high temperature
- loss of smell or taste

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

Further information on symptoms is available on NHS.UK.

If you cannot use the NHS website, phone 111 free of charge.

Further information

The Yellow Card scheme is a website where you can report any side effects from the vaccine. You can also call 0800 731 6789.

You can report suspected side effects on the website using the QR code below or by downloading the Yellow Card app.

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

coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk

Vaccination, helping to protect those most vulnerable.