



## 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
- with immunosuppression\* – those whose immune systems don't work as well
- who have profound and multiple or severe learning disabilities
- on the learning disability register
- who live with Down's syndrome
- 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 (immunosuppressed). This is to reduce the risk of them passing on the infection to their family members.

All these children 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.

Parents should receive a letter from their GP to invite them to make an appointment for their child to be vaccinated.

## Can your child give the COVID-19 infection to anyone after they 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](https://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 from your GP or Emergency Department if your child experiences:

- chest pain
- shortness of breath
- feelings of having a fast-beating, fluttering or pounding heart

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

You should receive an invitation letter explaining how to make the appointment for your child using the online booking system at <https://covid-19.hscni.net/get-vaccinated>

Those children who attend a special school may be able to get the vaccination in school. School nursing teams will contact you prior to the day of vaccination.

## 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:

- thinking about social distancing where possible
- following current advice on wearing a face covering
- letting in fresh air
- washing your hands carefully and often
- following the current guidance

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.nidirect.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 [www.nidirect.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/coronavirus)

## 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](http://coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk)

