



COVID-19 vaccinations

A guide for parents of children 6 months 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
- those whose immune systems don't work as well (immunosuppression)
- those with profound and multiple or severe learning disabilities (including Down's syndrome), and those on the learning disability register
- those with long term serious conditions affecting their health.

Eligible children and young people who are aged 6 months to 11 years should have the COVID-19 vaccinations. Your GP or specialist will know if they need to have the vaccine.

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 infection 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

Infants and children will be offered the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. Younger children will be offered an infant dose (one tenth of the adult dose) whereas those over 5 years are offered one third of the adult dose.

The initial course is 2 doses, at least 8 weeks apart. Children with very severely weakened immune systems, may need an extra (third) dose from 8 weeks after their second dose. Your child may also need a booster during seasonal campaigns. Your child may also catch up on any missed doses during these campaigns.

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 their child to be assessed to see if they are eligible for vaccination.

Does the vaccine protect children against COVID-19?

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

Common side effects

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. These 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

Most of these are mild and short term and not everyone gets them. These common side effects should only last a day or two.

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.

The Pfizer vaccine tends to cause more of these common side effects after the second dose than the first dose.

Rare but serious side effects

Worldwide, there have been rare cases of inflammation of the heart reported after the adult dose of COVID-19 vaccines. This seems to be extremely rare after the children's dose.

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 through a local GP practice, another vaccination site, or their specialist in clinics. 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 should be at least 8 weeks later.

Although the first dose will give them good protection against severe disease, further doses will help to get longer-lasting protection. Your child may be eligible to catch up or to get a booster during the next campaign.

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.

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 until they are better before having the vaccine.



After the vaccine

You and your child can still reduce the chance of catching COVID-19 infections by:

- following current advice on wearing a face mask
- meeting outdoors or if indoors, letting fresh air in
- washing your hands and your child's hands carefully and often
- following the current guidance ([gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.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 Yellow Card website.



yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk

CATCH IT



Germs spread easily. Always carry tissues and use them to catch your cough or sneeze.

BIN IT



Germs can live for several hours on tissues. Dispose of your tissue as soon as possible.

KILL IT



Hands can transfer germs to every surface you touch. Clean your hands as soon as you can.

Vaccination, helping to protect those most vulnerable