Public Health England

NHS

COVID-19 vaccination

A guide for children and young people

Find out more at nhs/CovidVaccine

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 NHS is offering COVID-19 vaccine to some children and young people. This includes those aged 12-17 years at increased risk from infection who will need 2 doses of the vaccine 8 weeks apart. All young people aged 16 and 17 years will be offered a first dose of vaccine. The timing of a second dose for these 16-17 year olds will be confirmed later.

Are you at risk from COVID-19 infection?

Coronavirus can affect anyone. Some children and young people are at greater risk. This includes those who live with severe neurodisabilities, severe learning difficulties, Down's syndrome and other serious conditions. Your specialist or GP will tell you if you need the COVID-19 vaccination.

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.

Currently the vaccine licensed for children and young people is the Pfizer vaccine. This is what you will be offered.

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 NHS.UK.

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.

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 vaccine
- 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 call NHS 111.

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.

You should seek medical advice urgently if you experience:

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

Most of these people recovered and felt better following rest and simple treatments.

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.

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 you 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 to do next

After you have had the first dose you may be given a second appointment sometime later. Your record card will show the details of the first dose. You will be advised on the right timing for your second dose to help give the best, and longest lasting protection for you.

Keep your record card safe and make sure you keep your next appointment to get your second dose.

If you are not well when your appointment is due

You should not attend a vaccine appointment if you are self-isolating, waiting for a COVID-19 test or within 4 weeks of having a positive COVID-19 test.

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 mask**
- **wash your hands regularly**
- **open windows to let fresh air in**
- **follow the current guidance**

www.gov.uk/coronavirus

Further information

You or your parents can 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.

Further information is available from www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/

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V1. COV2021YPM 2.5M 1p AUG 2021 (APS)
Public Health England gateway number: 2021442