

Covid-19 vaccination for children and young people over 12

Frequently Asked Questions

Is the Pfizer vaccine safe for children over 12?

Yes. The NHS will not offer any COVID-19 vaccinations to the public until independent experts have signed off that it is safe to do so. The Medicines & Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), the official UK regulator, have said that all the vaccines approved have good safety profiles and offer a high level of protection.

Following clinical trials with thousands of children over 12 the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine has been licensed for children and young people. This is what you will be offered.

How can the vaccine be safe it was developed so quickly?

As with any medicine, vaccines are highly regulated products. There are checks at every stage in the development and manufacturing process and monitoring continues once it has been authorised and is being used in the wider population.

The COVID-19 pandemic is the most significant worldwide health crisis in over 100 years. An unprecedented amount of investment, research and development went into rapidly creating safe and effective vaccines.

COVID-19 is not the first coronavirus and over the past few years scientists have been developing potential vaccines against other coronavirus strains (for instance, SARS). When the pandemic began in 2020, the largest investment ever seen was dedicated to producing a vaccine, due to the social and economic impact of COVID-19.

Why are children and young people being vaccinated when they are at less risk from COVID-19?

Coronavirus can affect anyone. For most children and young people COVID-19 is usually a milder illness that rarely leads to complications. For some the symptoms may last for longer than the usual 2 to 3 weeks. The vaccination will help to protect you against COVID-19 and possible 'Long COVID'.

We also believe that vaccinating children and young people over 12 will help to minimise the spread of COVID-19 and any new variants, helping to keep schools open and your family and community safe.

What are the side effects?

The COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in the UK have met strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness.

As with all medicines, they can cause some side effects, but not everyone gets them. Any side effects are usually mild and should not last longer than a week, such as:

- a sore arm from the injection

- feeling tired
- a headache
- feeling achy
- feeling or being sick

Millions of people have had the Pfizer BioNTech (COVID-19) vaccine and the safety of the vaccines continues to be monitored. Reports of serious side effects, such as allergic reactions, blood clotting or inflammation of the heart (myocarditis), are very rare.

What about the risk of myocarditis (inflammation of the heart)?

Research on millions of people who've had the Pfizer vaccine shows there is a tiny risk of myocarditis, or inflammation of the heart, which is more common in young people - and particularly younger boys - after a second dose. It can cause chest pain and a pounding heart, but symptoms usually clear up in days.

Data from the USA shows the numbers of children affected are very small:

For every million second doses given to 12-17 year old boys, 60 had the condition.

For every million second doses given to 12-17 year old girls, 8 had the condition.

What should we do before my child has their vaccine?

Please ensure that they eat breakfast of the morning of their vaccination. This will help reduce the rare risk of fainting. Sugary drinks and food will be offered if required.

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.

Who cannot have the vaccine?

It is very rare for anyone to have a serious reaction to the vaccine (anaphylaxis). If this does happen, it usually happens within minutes of receiving the vaccine where trained clinical professionals are on hand to attend to you immediately. If your child has a history of anaphylaxis reactions, please include details on your consent form.

Should my child get vaccinated if they have already had COVID, have antibodies from previous infection or they are suffering from 'Long COVID'?

Yes. The Medicines & Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) have looked at this and decided that getting vaccinated is just as important for your child, even if they have already had COVID-19.

Will the vaccines affect my child's fertility?

There is no evidence that the vaccine affects fertility in either males or females.

What if I don't want my child to be vaccinated?

We won't vaccinate any young person without consent.

To vaccinate children and young people under 16 we will need a consent form completed by a parent or guardian.

If your child is over 16, in most cases, they can consent for themselves. However, we encourage you to discuss getting vaccinated with them.

What happens if I decide not to get my child vaccinated?

You may decide to wait until more information is available about COVID-19 vaccines in children and young people before deciding to get a vaccine.

If you decide not to get your child vaccinated, there is a greater risk they could get COVID-19. Their symptoms will most likely be mild if they get the virus, but they will still need to isolate from others. This means they may miss school and other activities.

What if I want to get my child vaccinated but they are nervous about doing it at school?

The clinics in the school are being run by experienced clinicians who are used to working in schools. If your child is nervous then they can speak to the vaccination team who should be able to reassure them.

However, if your child really doesn't want to get the vaccine at school then you should contact your GP practice and discuss alternative options.

More detailed information from the NHS and Frequently Asked Questions can be found [here](#):

[FAQs - South East London CCG \(selondonccg.nhs.uk\)](https://www.selondonccg.nhs.uk/faq)

[NHS Vaccine Facts](#)