

Tuesday, 8 February 2022

COVID-19 vaccines to be administered in secondary schools and colleges

First, second and booster doses will be offered to eligible students in secondary schools and colleges, from Friday 11 February.

From today, parents and carers of eligible students aged 12 to 18 will receive letters and leaflets about the schools vaccination programme through their child's school or college.

This follows the initial COVID-19 vaccination rollout in schools in December 2021, where 455 first vaccination doses were administered across 13 schools for students aged 12 to 18. This saw the programme's uptake increase by 10%.

Parents and carers of students aged between 12 and 15 who consent to having their child vaccinated must return the consent form to school as soon as possible before nurses visit to vaccinate. Students aged 16 and over can complete the consent form for themselves.

Booster doses are currently being offered to children aged 16 and over. A small number of 16 and 17 year olds who have already received their second dose will be able to receive their booster dose at school, if the required interval between doses or a recent COVID-19 infection is complete.

Young people who prefer to receive their vaccination accompanied by their parent or carer, are able to get vaccinated at the Vaccination Centre. Appointments and 'walk-ins' for first, second and booster doses will remain available at Fort Regent outside of school hours.

On Wednesday 16 February, students will have the opportunity to ask a panel of experts questions about the COVID-19 vaccine, at an event in Highlands College Great Hall. The panel will include Children and Education Minister Deputy Scott Wickenden, CYPES Director General Robert Sainsbury, Deputy Medical Officer for Health, Dr Ivan Muscat,

Head of Vaccine Programme, Emma Baker, Education Director, Seán O'Regan and Highlands College Principal Jo Terry-Marchant.

COVID-19 vaccines for young people are approved by regulatory bodies around the world including the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Authority (MHRA), the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and have been rolled out in the United States, Canada and Europe.

Last year, the four UK Chief Medical Officers agreed that vaccination should be recommended to young people aged 12 and over based on evidence from child health, mental health, general practice and public health which was needed to complete a holistic review in addition to the singular clinical focus of JCVI.

Minister for Health and Social Services, Deputy Richard Renouf, said: "Following the success of the initial school COVID-19 vaccination rollout last year which administered only first doses, the Vaccination Team will be revisiting schools a second time round with first, second and booster doses.

"As at Sunday 30 January, 49% of 12 to 15 year olds and 64% of 16 and 17 year olds in Jersey had received their first dose. I urge those who have not yet had their first dose to use this opportunity at school to get it. Staying up to date with your vaccination schedule is so important to reduce disruption in schools and allowing students to stay in face to face teaching with their friends. This is not only so important for their education, but also their mental health and wellbeing."

Deputy Medical Officer of Health, Dr Ivan Muscat, said: "Two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine is universally recommended to children aged 12 and over, and booster doses are recommended to all children aged 16 and over. Being up to date with your vaccination schedule is vital to reduce your chance of catching COVID-19, and preventing severe illness which may lead to hospitalisation or Long Covid.

"Just a single dose of vaccine in children reduces the infection rate by around 50%, and reduces symptomatic infection by two thirds compared to unvaccinated children. I am aware of the concerns when it comes to vaccinating children, but I would like to reassure parents and carers once again that these vaccines are proven to be safe for young people not just in trials but in real life with millions of doses of the vaccine now having been given to children worldwide."

Education and Children's Minister, Deputy Scott Wickenden, said: "I would like to offer my thanks to parents, teachers and students who have shared their feedback to help inform the second rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination in schools.

"I hope that this further rollout will allow children to easily get their second doses if they have not already done so, or their booster doses if eligible. Additionally, it is not too late

for those who missed out on getting their first doses last time to get their first dose this time round. Those who would prefer to get their vaccination at Fort Regent can continue to go without a booked appointment.”

Children’s Commissioner Deborah McMillan, said: “I am very supportive of the Vaccination Team who will be revisiting schools and colleges in Jersey to offer first, second and booster doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

“The first roll-out last year was successful, so I hope more children come forward for their first doses, and those who have already had their first dose, will be able to get their second or booster dose if eligible. Parental consent is required for children aged 12 to 15 so I urge parents to review the information provided to them which is designed to help them make an informed decision and return those consent forms to schools before nurses visit.”