



COVID-19 school vaccination

Vaccination programme for young people - Guidance for parents

Why should I have my child vaccinated?

The UK's Chief Medical Officers all agree that while COVID-19 is typically mild or asymptomatic in most young people, it can be very unpleasant for some and one dose of the vaccine will provide good protection against severe illness and hospitalisation.

Vaccinating young people should also help to reduce the need for students to have time-off school and reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 within schools.

The COVID-19 vaccination programme should therefore provide protection to young people and reduce the disruption of face to face education or the need for remote learning from home. This will help to keep young people emotionally well and happier which was an important consideration for the Chief Medical Officers in the UK.

The coronavirus [COVID-19] vaccine

The COVID-19 vaccine helps to reduce the chance of COVID-19 infection and provides good protection against serious disease. It may take a couple of weeks to build up some protection from the first dose of vaccine. Young people who have had one dose of a vaccine are half as likely to catch COVID-19 as someone who has not been vaccinated.

Is it safe for young people?

The medicines regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), European Medicines Agency (EMA) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have confirmed the Pfizer vaccine is safe and effective for young people.

All vaccines have been through rigorous clinical trials and the Pfizer vaccine has now been given to millions of children around the world.

These videos explain this in more detail:

<https://twitter.com/DHSCgovuk/status/1434441175281274890>

<https://twitter.com/DHSCgovuk/status/1405246298320637960>

<https://twitter.com/DHSCgovuk/status/1375364398601039872>

<https://twitter.com/DHSCgovuk/status/1421206463297441793>

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.

Very common side effects in the first day or two include:

- having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection
- feeling tired
- headache, aches and chills
- young people may also have flu-like symptoms with episodes of shivering and shaking for a day or two.

We suggest that young people, like adults, should rest and take paracetamol (following the dose advice in the packaging) to help make them feel better.

Very rare serious side effects

Worldwide, there have been, very rare cases of inflammation of the heart called myocarditis or pericarditis reported after COVID-19 vaccines. The vast majority of these people felt better following rest and simple treatments.

The incidents of myocarditis in the UK is low after both first and second doses of the vaccine.

The risk of serious disease due to COVID is at least 10 times greater than the risk of mild myocarditis following one dose of the vaccine.

Will my child be observed after vaccination?

Serious allergic reactions to vaccination are very rare but tend to happen within a few minutes of the injection. Our experienced team are trained to spot and manage allergic reactions.

Children with allergies to common food items are not at higher risk of these serious allergies.

Where can I find more information on COVID-19 vaccine?

Information leaflets for parents and young people are available at gov.uk/vax.

Eligibility and timing of vaccine

Young people aged 12 to 17 who have had a positive PCR test result must ensure that 8 weeks or more have passed since the date of the test. Young people aged 18 and over must ensure 4 weeks have passed since the date of the test. If the required number of weeks have not passed, the vaccine will not be administered, following advice from the JCVI.

All young people aged 16 to 17 years of age will be offered two doses and a booster dose of the vaccine. The second dose will be offered 8 weeks after the first dose was administered, or 8 weeks after testing positive for COVID-19, whichever comes later.

Young people aged 12 to 17 years who are at increased risk from infection or living with someone who is immunosuppressed have been offered 2 doses of the vaccine, 8 weeks apart. They are also eligible for a booster dose 12 weeks after the second dose was administered.

Any young person who turns 12 years of age will be offered two doses of the vaccine 8 weeks apart.

How does the consent process work?

All parents, or those with parental responsibility, are asked for consent and should make this decision jointly with their children. There is an information leaflet addressed to young people (as the recipient of the vaccine) which encourages them to discuss the decision about the vaccine with their parents.

The vaccine is not mandatory. Should you decide to get your child vaccinated, you will need to give the consent form to their school. Nurses will visit the school to administer the vaccine on an allocated day.

If you would like your child to get the vaccine but don't want it administered at school, it will remain available at Fort Regent. You will be required to attend with your child as you need to sign a consent form when you're there. This parental consent process is the same as any other childhood vaccine.

If no consent is received, and the young person is not Gillick competent (whether they have enough understanding to consent) or does not want to be vaccinated, the immunisation will not proceed.

You can read the Green Book of Immunisation for more information on consent including Gillick competence – www.gov.uk/government/publications/consent-the-green-book-chapter-2.

Common questions

My child has allergies, can they have the vaccination?

There are very few young people who cannot receive the vaccine.

Prior to vaccination all individuals are issued with a leaflet that outlines safety information about the vaccine. This will include a link to more detailed information about any health conditions that may prevent a young person from receiving vaccination. You can read the 'Information for UK recipients' of the Pfizer vaccines here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/943249/Information_for_UK_recipients.pdf

I have heard vaccines can cause irregular periods or unexpected bleeding?

Period problems are extremely common and can be caused by a variety of factors including stress, physiological responses and other short-term illnesses. Although some people have reported that their periods were briefly disrupted in the month after vaccination, there is no evidence that this was due to the vaccine.

Can vaccines effect fertility?

There is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines affect fertility in males or in females. There is some helpful information on the website of the British Fertility Society.

Do the vaccines contain alcohol?

There is no alcohol in the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines which is the recommended vaccine for young people.

Do the COVID-19 vaccines contain animal products?

The MHRA has confirmed that the vaccines do not contain anything of animal origin. All ingredients are published in healthcare information on the MHRA's website.

This video provides more information:

<https://twitter.com/DHSCgovuk/status/1387368497517236234>.

Is the vaccine suitable for young people who are vegan/vegetarian friendly, Muslim or Jewish?

The Pfizer vaccine does not contain any meat derivatives, animal products or any egg.

The British Islamic Medical Association have produced a helpful guide which can be found at <https://britishima.org/operation-vaccination/hub/>.

Do the vaccines contain COVID-19?

No, the vaccines do not contain any live virus.