COVID-19 vaccination

A guide for children aged 5-11 years who are at greater risk from COVID-19 infection

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This information sheet explains the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination programme for children aged 5-11 years who are at greater risk from COVID-19 infection

What is COVID-19 or coronavirus?

COVID-19 is a very infectious respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Very few children 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.

Is your child able to have the COVID-19 vaccine?

The NHS is offering COVID-19 vaccine to children and young people. This includes those aged 5-11 years at greater risk of severe illness from COVID-19 who will need 2 doses of the vaccine 8 weeks apart.

It is also being offered to children aged 5 years and above who are the household contact of someone who is immunosuppressed.

The vaccination will help to protect your child against COVID-19 and help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Currently the preferred vaccine for children is the Pfizer vaccine. They will be offered a lower dose compared to that given to individuals aged 12 and above.

Is it safe for children?

The medicines regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), has confirmed the Pfizer vaccine is safe and effective for children. This followed a rigorous review of the safety, quality and effectiveness of the vaccines in this age group.

Is my child at risk from COVID-19 infection?

Coronavirus can affect anyone. Some children are at greater risk including those living with serious conditions such as:

● cancers (such as leukaemia or lymphoma)

● diabetes

● serious heart problems

● chest complaint or breathing difficulties,

including poorly controlled asthma

● kidney, liver or a gut disease

● lowered immunity due to disease or treatment (steroid medication, chemotherapy or radiotherapy)

● an organ transplant

● a neurodisability or neuromuscular condition

● a severe or profound learning disability

● Down's syndrome

● a problem with your spleen, e.g. sickle cell disease, or you have had your spleen removed

● epilepsy

● serious genetic problems

● other serious medical conditions as advised by your doctor or specialist.

For most children 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.

Will the vaccine protect my child?

The COVID-19 vaccination will reduce the chance of your child suffering from COVID-19 disease. It is also likely vaccination will help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in schools. It may take a few weeks for your child's body to build up some protection from the vaccine. They should get good protection from the first dose; further recommended doses should give them 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.

The vaccines do not contain organisms that grow in the body, and so are safe for children 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.

What do I need to do?

- You will receive information about when and where to get your child vaccinated.
- If your child lives with someone who is immunosuppressed you will need to make a self-referral here: gov.wales/covid-19-vaccinationshousehold-contactsimmunosuppressed-people
- On the day of the appointment, dress your child in practical clothing so it is easy to get to the top of their arm.
- If they have a fear of needles or feel anxious, let the person giving them their vaccine know. They will be understanding and support them.

What about giving consent?

All parents and carers with parental responsibility will be asked to give informed consent for their child to have the vaccine.

Are there any reasons why your child should not get the vaccine?

There are very few children who cannot get the COVID-19 vaccine.

The vaccine should not be given to children:

- who have had a confirmed anaphylactic reaction to any of the ingredients of the vaccine
- who have had a confirmed anaphylactic reaction to a previous dose of the same COVID-19 vaccine.

Children with a history of serious allergic reaction to food, an identified drug or vaccine, or an insect sting can get the COVID-19 vaccine, as long as they are not known to be allergic to any component of the vaccine. It is important that you tell the person giving your child their vaccine if they have ever had a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis).

Can COVID-19 vaccines be given at the same time as other vaccines?

Yes, COVID-19 vaccines can be given at the same time as most other vaccines. For the latest advice on COVID-19 vaccines and co-administration please visit: phw.nhs.wales/covidvaccine

When should my child have the vaccine if they have had COVID-19 infection?

They should:

- wait at least 4 weeks following COVID-19 infection before vaccination if they are in a group that is at greater risk of serious illness from COVID-19.

- follow current guidance on paediatric multisystem inflammatory syndrome (PIMS-TS) cases that suggests an interval of 12 weeks should be observed, although earlier administration can be considered in those at risk of infection and/or who are fully recovered.

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 in the first day or two include:

- a heavy feeling or soreness where you had the injection
- feeling achy or like you've got the flu
- feeling tired

- having a headache

If your child has a fever and feels unwell after the vaccination, they can take paracetamol to help make them feel better. Read the instructions on the packet carefully and take the correct dose for your child's age. We don't recommend taking these medicines beforehand to prevent a fever from developing. Although feeling feverish is not uncommon for 2 to 3 days, a high temperature is unusual and may indicate they have COVID-19 or another infection.

Remember – children under 16 should not take medicines that contain aspirin.

Symptoms following vaccination normally last less than a week.

If their symptoms seem to get worse or if you are concerned, you can look at: 111.wales.nhs.uk online, and if necessary call NHS 111 Wales on **111** or your GP surgery. If 111 is not available in your area, call **0845 46 47**. Calls to 111 are free from landlines and mobiles. Calls to 0845 46 47 cost 2p per minute plus your telephone provider's usual access charge.

Less common side effects

Recently, cases of inflammation of the heart (called myocarditis or pericarditis) have been reported very rarely in the first week after COVID-19 vaccines. Most of these cases have been in younger men and are more common after the second vaccination. Most people recovered and felt better following rest and simple treatments.

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 do seek advice from a doctor or nurse, make sure you tell them about your child's vaccination (show them their vaccine record card, if possible) so that they can assess them properly.

Make sure you keep their vaccine record card safe.

You can also report suspected side effects to vaccines and medicines online through the Yellow Card scheme. The Coronavirus Yellow Card system is a website where you can report any side effects from the vaccine. You can access this website by visiting: 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 for your child to have caught COVID-19 and not have the symptoms until after their 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 they have the symptoms above, stay at home and arrange for them to have a test by phoning 119 (calls are free) or online at: gov.wales/get-tested-coronavirus-covid-19

If you need more information on symptoms visit 111.wales.nhs.uk

What to do next

After your child has had their first dose they will given a second appointment at the recommended interval. Their vaccine record card will show the details of the first dose. You will be advised on the right timing for your child's second dose to help give them the best and longest lasting protection. Keep their vaccine record card safe and make sure you keep their next appointment for them to have their second dose.

If your child is not well when their appointment is due

They should not attend a vaccine appointment if they are self-isolating, or waiting for a COVID-19 test or result. Wait until they have recovered to have the vaccine.

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 the current guidance at gov.wales/coronavirus

More information

You can find out more information about COVID-19 vaccines, including their contents and possible side effects at: coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/productinformation

You can report suspected side effects online at: coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk or by downloading the Yellow Card app.

To find out how the NHS uses your information, visit: 111.wales.nhs.uk/AboutUs/ Yourinformation

For other formats of this leaflet visit: phw.nhs.wales/ covid-19-vaccination