COVID-19 vaccination

A guide for children and young people

September 2021

This leaflet explains the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination programme for 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.

Am I able to have the have the COVID-19 vaccine?

The NHS is offering COVID-19 vaccine to 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 other children and young people aged 12-17 years will be offered a first dose of vaccine. The timing of a second dose 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 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 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 and help reduce the spread of 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 is also likely vaccination will help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in schools and reduce, but not stop education disruption. 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.

If you need more information on symptoms visit: **111.wales.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.

What do I need to do?

- You will receive information about when and where to get vaccinated.
- On the day of the appointment, wear practical clothing so it's easy to get to the top of your arm.
- If you have a fear of needles or feel anxious, let the person giving your vaccine know. They will be understanding and support you.

What about giving consent?

It is best to involve your parent or carer in your decision about having the vaccine, but in some circumstances you can give permission yourself if you fully understand what is being offered. Make sure you read the information about the COVID-19 vaccination and understand the risks and benefits to you. The nurse or vaccinator will discuss the COVID -19 vaccine with you at your appointment and will be able to answer any questions you may have.

Are there any reasons you should not get the vaccine?

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

The vaccine should not be given to:

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

People 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 you your vaccine if you've 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**

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

You can rest and take paracetamol (follow the advice in the packaging and take the correct dose for your age) 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 or carer 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 after COVID-19 vaccines. This less common side effect has been reported in 3 to 17 cases per million after first vaccinations and in 12 to 34 cases per million for the second vaccination, based on international data for all 12-15 year olds. Many of these cases have been in boys and most of these people recovered and felt better following rest and simple treatments.

You should seek medical advice urgently if you experience:

• chest pain

• shortness of breath

• feelings of having a fast-beating, fluttering, or pounding heart

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 your vaccine record card, if possible) so that they can assess you properly.

Make sure you keep your vaccine record card safe.

You or your parents and carers 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 may need support to access this website: **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 by phoning 119 (calls are free) or online at: **gov.wales/get-tested-coronavirus-covid-19**

What to do next

After you have had the first dose you may be given a second appointment sometime later. Your vaccine 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 vaccine 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. You or your parents or carers should call to cancel and wait until you 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 any national or local restrictions and:

* when advised wear a face mask

* wash your hands regularly

* open windows to let fresh air in

* 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**

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is also available in Welsh.