

## **COVID-19 vaccination for 5 to 11-year-olds**

### **Fact sheet and information**

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#### **Background**

Following updated guidance from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), all 5 to 11-year-olds will be eligible for two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, with a minimum interval of 12 weeks between doses.

This is a non-urgent, evergreen offer and as such parents and their children can take it up at a time that suits them. Vaccinations are due to start in early April.

Parents must give consent for their child to be vaccinated.

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#### **Key Facts for parents and professionals**

##### **Where will children be given their vaccine?**

Children in this age group will not be given the vaccine at school. Children will be able to access the vaccine through a site run by vaccination centres, local pharmacies or local GPs.

Vaccination sites are required to allocate more time to vaccinate children and can make reasonable adjustments to support your attendance and ensure your child can receive their vaccine. Please ensure you make any requirements known ahead of time to enable staff can support.

##### **Is the vaccine safe for children?**

Clinical trials have found the vaccine to be safe and immunogenic. Immune responses in vaccinated 5 to 11 year olds were at least as good as those measured in 15 to 25 year olds who received the adult dose. Adverse reactions due to vaccination were mainly low-grade local and systematic reactions (sore arms, chills etc) lasting one to 2 days and no cases of myocarditis were observed. Research shows the COVID-19 vaccine can prevent the virus's worst effects, can reduce the risk of hospitalisation, and it can protect your child and those around them from catching the virus as easily. The majority of children and young people (CYP) experience only mild symptoms following COVID-19 infection or are asymptomatic. However, there is evidence that some will experience Long COVID, and a minority of children may develop a delayed response known as Paediatric Inflammatory Multisystem Syndrome (PIMS-TS or PIMS) following COVID-19 infection.

**Why are we vaccinating this age group?**

JCVI has recommended that the NHS offer vaccinations to all 5-11 year olds, to boost immunity and increase their protection against any future waves of COVID-19. This recommendation has been accepted by Government and the vaccine has been approved for this age group by the UK's medicines regulator, so the NHS is preparing to offer the vaccine to this group. COVID-19 is still active and causing some children to miss out on their education and the things they enjoy. The NHS wants to support families to make an informed choice, and to make things convenient and child-friendly for those who do decide to get it.

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**Questions and Answers****Is COVID-19 serious in young children?**

For most children COVID-19 is a mild illness that may require a few days off school but rarely leads to complications. For a very few children, the symptoms can be more serious or last longer. Children with certain health conditions, or those with a weakened immune system, are at higher risk of serious COVID-19 disease. These children and those who live with someone who has a weakened immune system should already have been invited for vaccination.

**My child has already had COVID-19 and has built up natural immunity. Why do they still need the vaccine?**

The COVID-19 vaccine should give your child stronger protection than natural immunity from previous infection against serious complications of infection – including any future waves due to new variants. Your child should also have some protection from the mild symptoms, and vaccination lowers the risk they will pass the virus on to others around them.

**What is long-COVID?**

For some people, coronavirus (COVID-19) can cause symptoms that last weeks or months after the infection has gone. This is sometimes called post-COVID-19 syndrome or "long COVID". The chances of having long-term symptoms does not seem to be linked to how ill you are when you first get COVID-19. People who had mild symptoms at first can still have long-term problems. There are lots of symptoms you can have after a COVID-19 infection. Common long COVID symptoms include extreme tiredness, shortness of breath and difficulty sleeping.

**Does my child have to get the vaccine?**

As well as protecting children and young people against serious COVID infection, by getting vaccinated, children and young people can reduce the risk of passing on the infection to others in their family and those they come into contact with. Getting the vaccine can also make it easier for children and young people to avoid putting their lives and their education on hold because of further disruption to schools, hobbies and social events due to the virus. The decision to vaccinate your child is entirely down to you as a parent.

**Where will children get the vaccine?**

Children in this age group will not be vaccinated in schools. Vaccination centres, pharmacies and GPs in every part of England are offering the COVID-19 vaccine to help protect 5-11 year olds. Invitation letters will be sent out and appointments can be booked easily, just visit [www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination](http://www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination) or call 119 to book your first or second dose. There are also convenient vaccine walk-ins across the country, which you can find on [www.nhs.uk/grab-a-jab](http://www.nhs.uk/grab-a-jab) the online finder shows which walk-in sites can vaccinate which age groups.

**Are the COVID-19 vaccines for 5 to 11-year-olds the same as those used for adults. What type of vaccine will they get and how many doses?**

The preferred option for children in this cohort is the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine (Comirnaty®) 10 micrograms dose concentrate, which is a formulation for children aged 5 to 11. However, it is recognised that in exceptional circumstances, and where it is in the best interests of the patient, clinicians may decide to vaccinate children and young people under the age of 12 with a smaller volume of the adult version of the vaccine (a fractionated dose). Children aged 5-11 with no other underlying health conditions will be offered two paediatric doses of the vaccine, with at least 12 weeks between doses. Children who are deemed to be clinically vulnerable should have already been contacted to receive the same dose but with a gap of eight weeks.

**My child is scared of injections will this be a problem?**

All vaccination sites, including GPs and Pharmacies are making efforts to ensure the vaccination environment is child-friendly and welcoming for families with young children. Vaccinators will make reasonable adjustments and fast-track individuals who are worried about vaccination. For example, sites may offer longer appointments and minimise the waiting time for children who are feeling anxious. All staff are specifically trained and have a number of different distraction mechanisms/toys available

**Should the child take paracetamol prior to vaccination as they did before pre school jabs?**

This is not recommended however paracetamol can be given post vaccination to relieve any minor symptoms at the recommended dose for the age of the child.

**What adjustments are being made to support children with additional needs attending vaccination appointments?**

Our standards require sites to allocate more time for vaccinating children. If a child will require any reasonable adjustments at their vaccination appointment to support attendance and delivery of the vaccination, parents should make any requirements needed known when they are booking the appointment on behalf of their child. It is important services are aware of any appropriate arrangements needed in advance.

**What safeguarding measures are the NHS putting in place?**

Additional safeguarding standards will be in place for staff involved in vaccinating this age group. All the clinical staff working in the centre are required to have an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check. In addition, all staff (excluding stewards) must have additional bespoke training.

**Will vaccination staff be offered special training?**

A number of additional resources have been prepared to assist providers in preparing the workforce and the environment for young children. All staff involved in vaccinating 5 to 11-year-olds will have appropriate training specific to communicating with and vaccinating this age group. For staff vaccinating children with special educational needs and disabilities, all clinical staff are required to have the skill and competences to care for this group of patients.

**Will vaccination appointments be available at flexible times to fit around families' work and school commitments?** Hampshire and Isle of Wight

Vaccination sites should ensure a range of times are available which are convenient to parents and children and many have agreed to open at evenings and weekends to make it as easy as possible.

**Can vaccination be provided with a nasal spray like with flu?**

No, the COVID-19 vaccine is currently only available as an injection.

**I want to get my child vaccinated –what is the consent process?**

Parents, carers or those with parental responsibilities should attend COVID-19 vaccination appointments with their child. Unlike vaccinations in schools, consent is collected on the day so this is the best way to make sure they can be vaccinated by going through questions together on site. For looked after children, please refer to the care plan where permissions and restrictions of consent will be outlined.