



# COVID-19 vaccination

## Vaccination programme for young people - Guidance for parents

This autumn, all young people aged 12 to 15 years are being offered the first dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. COVID-19 is a very infectious respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Very few healthy children and young people with COVID-19 infection go on to have severe disease.

### **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 12 to 15 year olds should also help to reduce the need for young people to have time-off school and reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 within schools.

The COVID-19 vaccine programme should therefore provide protection to young people and reduce the disruption of face to face education. This will help to keep young people emotionally well and happier and this 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 few weeks to build up some protection from the first dose of vaccine.

## 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 12 to 17 year olds.

This followed a rigorous review of the safety, quality and effectiveness of the vaccines in this age group.

The UK has also benefited from having data from Europe, the USA, Canada and Israel, which have already offered vaccines universally to young people aged 12 to 15 years.

These videos explain this in more detail:

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

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

## How were the vaccines developed so quickly?

All vaccines have had 3 stages of clinical trials and were tested on tens of thousands of people around the world. The trial phases overlapped, speeding up the overall time of vaccine production, but not the critical research time. Since December 2020 the Pfizer vaccine has been given to millions of people in the UK and has an excellent safety record.

These videos explain this in more detail:

<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 2.

Very common side effects in the first day or 2 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 recent, very rare cases of inflammation of the heart called myocarditis or pericarditis reported after COVID-19 vaccines. Most of these people felt better following rest and simple treatments.

These cases have been seen mostly in younger males and mainly occurred within a few days of the second dose; myocarditis is extremely rare after the first dose of the vaccine.

The risk of serious disease due to COVID is at least 10 times greater than the risk of 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, and so all children will be observed for 15 minutes.

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.je/vaccine](http://gov.je/vaccine).

## **Eligibility and timing of vaccine**

All young people aged 16 to 17 years of age have been offered a first dose of the vaccine.

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.

All young people aged 12 to 15 years are now being offered a first dose of the vaccine at the Vaccination Centre at Fort Regent.

Any young person who turns 12 years of age will be offered the vaccine.

## **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. Parents will be asked to give their consent for the vaccine. Young people may express a wish to have the vaccine and may have the capacity to provide informed consent themselves. Parents should be encouraged to speak to their children ahead of time so that there is agreement on consent in advance of the vaccination session.

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](http://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](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.