

Covid Vaccinations for Children: Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is COVID-19 disease 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.

2. My child is healthy. What are the benefits of them having the COVID-19 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

A full list of symptoms is available [on the NHS website](#).

5. Is there more risk to a child having COVID-19 or the vaccine?

The risk to a child of serious impact from COVID-19 is relatively low, but it will be lower if they get the vaccine. 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. The vaccine has been tested across the world and found to be safe and effective, including for children this age.

6. Why is the NHS offering vaccinations to 5–11-year-olds when the Government/JCVI has said it is not urgent?

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.

7. Will the vaccine give my child COVID-19?

Your child cannot catch COVID-19 from the vaccine. There is sometimes a delay in vaccine symptoms so it is possible they could catch the virus but not realise this until after their vaccination.

8. How long will the vaccine protect my child from COVID-19?

The COVID-19 vaccination will reduce the chance of your child suffering from COVID-19 disease. It may take a few weeks for their body to build up maximum protection from the vaccine. Two doses of the vaccine should give your child long lasting protection against serious complications of infection – including any future waves due to new variants. Some children may still get COVID-19 despite being vaccinated, but this should be less severe. If a child has had COVID-19 they will still get extra protection from the vaccine, but they will need to wait 12 weeks before getting vaccinated.

9. Which vaccine will my child be given and how many doses will they need?

Children aged 5-11 with no other underlying health conditions are offered two doses of the vaccine, with at least 12 weeks between doses. For children aged 5-11, the dose is smaller than the doses given to those aged 12 and over. 5-11-year olds will be given 10 micrograms of the vaccine, compared to older children who receive 30 micrograms of the vaccine. A smaller dose will still provide protection against COVID19 while also reducing the risk of side-effects for younger children.

10. Why is there a difference in the dose for 5–11-year-olds and those over 12?

5-11-year-olds will be given 10 micrograms of the vaccine, compared to the 30 micrograms of the vaccine given to older children. The majority of children and young people (CYP) experience only mild symptoms following COVID-19 infection or are asymptomatic. A smaller dose will provide protection while also reducing the risk of side-effects.

11. Is the 5-11 dose as effective as the adult dose?

The immune response in 5-11-year olds after the 10 micrograms dose of the vaccine will protect them from severe disease and reduce the risk of side-effects. The vaccine does not remove the virus, but research and experience of countries around the world shows it can prevent the worst effects of COVID-19 and reduce the risk of infection to your child and those around them.

12. My child is vulnerable/at risk. When should they have their vaccine?

Children who are in a risk group should already have received invitations to have the vaccine, from their GP, specialist or the NHS. Children in a risk group are offered two doses, eight weeks apart. Children aged 12-15 years will also be offered a booster dose at least three months after they've had their first two doses. Some children aged 12-15 years may have had a severely

weakened immune system when they had their first two doses. These children will be offered another dose at least eight weeks after their second dose and will then also be able to receive a booster dose from 3 months after this.

13. Where can I get my child the COVID-19 vaccine?

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 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 - that online finder shows which walk-in sites can vaccinate which age groups.

14. 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. Follow the link for further information on consent to treatment for children and young people.

15. My child is scared of injections – is it better to visit a vaccination site or GP/Pharmacy?

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. 16. Will my child be offered a booster? The NHS follows government decisions about who to vaccinate and the number of doses they received, which reflect recommendations of the Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisations (JCVI). Currently there are no plans to offer healthy 5–11-year-olds a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.