

Vaccination against COVID-19 for children age 12 to 17

If your child is under 14 years of age, it is very important that you complete the consent form and return it to the school as soon as possible, whether you choose to have your child vaccinated or not. If your child is age 14 or older, they can provide their own consent for vaccination.

Pfizer's messenger RNA (mRNA) COVID-19 vaccine is recommended for children age 12 and over.

The primary goal of the vaccine is to protect against COVID-19 and related complications.

Your child should wear a short-sleeved shirt on vaccination day.

COVID-19

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an infection caused by a virus in the coronavirus family. There are several types of coronavirus. Most cause mild symptoms, but others can cause more severe symptoms, like COVID-19, which is caused by the coronavirus known as SARS-CoV-2.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

In children, the main symptoms can be similar to those of the common cold. Most common symptoms are fever, cough, nausea and vomiting, stomachache, and diarrhea. Other symptoms can also appear like sore throat, headache, muscle aches, severe fatigue, severe loss of appetite, sudden loss of smell without nasal congestion, and difficulty breathing.

How is COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 is spread from person to person through contact with droplets released into the air when an infected person talks, coughs, or sneezes. An asymptomatic person can spread COVID-19 without realizing it. It can also be spread via contaminated surfaces and objects, although that's not the main mode of transmission.

What are the possible complications of COVID-19?

Possible complications of COVID-19 include:

- Pneumonia and other respiratory issues
- Heart problems
- Neurological problems
- Death

In addition to these complications, some people also experience COVID-19 symptoms such as loss of smell or fatigue lasting several months.

What's the best way to protect against COVID-19?

Vaccination is the best protection against COVID-19, especially when combined with other measures such as social distancing, wearing a mask or face covering, and hand washing.

Vaccination

Why vaccinate 12- to 17-year-olds?

The aim of vaccinating children age 12 to 17 is to protect them against COVID-19 and its complications.

Vaccination curbs the spread of the virus so they can keep going to school, sports, and social activities and things can get back to normal as soon as possible.

Which vaccine will be used?

Only the Pfizer vaccine has been approved by Health Canada for use in children age 12 to 17. Pfizer's mRNA COVID-19 vaccine will be used.

How many doses are required?

Two doses of Pfizer's mRNA COVID-19 vaccine are required, given via intramuscular injection.

Children who have already had COVID-19 may only need one dose of the vaccine. However, for those who are immunocompromised, two doses are required even if they have already had COVID-19. The vaccinator will determine how many doses are required for each children.

Is the Pfizer mRNA COVID-19 vaccine effective?

Yes. The vaccine is estimated to be 100% effective in preventing COVID-19 in children after two doses.

Is the Pfizer mRNA COVID-19 vaccine safe?

Yes. The Pfizer vaccine is approved by Health Canada. It was put through all the steps of the vaccine approval process. High quality studies were also performed on a large sample of people. Experts are closely monitoring any adverse reactions that could occur following vaccination and are taking steps to ensure that the vaccine is used safely.

How long does protection against COVID-19 last after vaccination?

Studies to better determine how long protection lasts are still ongoing. Protection last at least six months.

What are the possible reactions to the vaccine?

The majority of children will experience:

- pain at the injection site (90%),
- headache (76%),
- fatigue (78%).

Many children may also feel:

- chills (49%),
- fever (24%),

- muscle aches (42%),
- joint pain (20%).

Most of these reactions last one to two days. They are more common after the second dose.

Often, redness or swelling at the injection site is observed (9%).

Rarely, nausea or swelling of the armpit lymph nodes may occur (less than 1%).

In a minority of young people, reactions to the vaccine may prevent them from carrying out daily activities for one or two days, most commonly after the second dose.

About 1 in 50,000 people may have a severe allergic reaction after receiving the mRNA COVID-19 vaccine. The frequency of this reaction is higher than what is usually expected after a vaccine, but still very rare. This type of allergic reaction usually occurs within minutes. Staff onsite are trained on how to stop it right away.

Some rare cases (about 1 in 10,000 people) of myocarditis or pericarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle or its envelope) have been observed after administration of COVID-19 mRNA vaccines, particularly among young men after the 2nd dose of vaccine. Symptoms include shortness of breath, chest pain and palpitations. These conditions are rare and most of the cases observed have been mild and have recovered rapidly. Nonetheless, they should be taken seriously.

Can the vaccine cause COVID-19?

The vaccine can't cause COVID-19 because it doesn't contain the virus that causes the disease. However, if someone comes into contact with the virus in the days preceding or following their vaccination, they could still develop COVID-19. It's important to continue to follow health guidelines until most of the population has been vaccinated. Please consult www.nrbhss.ca/en/coronavirus for more details.

What should I do if they have a reaction to the vaccine?

Apply a cold wet compress to the injection site to reduce pain, swelling, redness, or itching. To reduce fever or discomfort, administer acetaminophen (like Tylenol) or ibuprofen (like Advil).

For more severe symptoms, such as shortness of breath, palpitations or chest pain call the Covid Healthline at **1-888-662-7482** or consult your nurse at your local CLSC.

nrbhss.ca/en/coronavirus

Quebec.ca/VaccinCOVID

Vaccination against COVID-19 for children age 12 to 17 infosheet, available at <https://publications.msss.gouv.qc.ca/msss/document-003040/>