

The
COVID-19
vaccine

Important information

for 12–17 year olds

Get protected against COVID-19



Please read this leaflet before getting the vaccine





What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory infection caused by a new coronavirus, known as SARS-CoV-2. It was first identified in late 2019. It is highly infectious and spreads through the air when people cough or sneeze, or when people touch surfaces where it has landed, then touch their eyes, nose or mouth.

Who is offered the COVID-19 vaccine?

NHS Scotland is offering the COVID-19 vaccine to all children and young people aged 12 to 17 years.

Two doses of the vaccine (eight weeks apart) are recommended for:

- those who are at increased risk from COVID-19 due to underlying health conditions
- those who live with someone who is immunosuppressed
- those aged 16 or 17 years who are an unpaid carer, a frontline health or social care worker or are within three months of their 18th birthday.

All other children and young people aged 12 to 17 years will be offered a first dose of the vaccine. The timing of a second dose will be confirmed later.

Who is at increased risk from COVID-19 infection?

COVID-19 can affect anyone. Some children and young people are at increased risk, including those living with certain conditions such as:

- 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 the spleen, such as sickle cell disease, or removal of the spleen
- epilepsy
- serious genetic problems
- cancers (such as leukaemia or lymphoma)
- other serious medical conditions as advised by a 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 two to three weeks. Getting the vaccine will help to protect children and young people against COVID-19. Although most children and young people usually have mild illness, they can pass on their infection to others in their family and those they come into contact with.

The vaccine currently licensed for children and young people is the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. This is what will be offered.

Will the vaccine offer good protection?

The COVID-19 vaccination will reduce the chance of young people catching COVID-19 disease. It may take a few weeks to build up some protection from the vaccine. The first dose should give good protection. Having the second dose should give 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 the illness should be less severe.

The vaccine does not contain organisms that grow in the body, and so is safe for children and young people with disorders of the immune system. These children and young people may not respond as well to the vaccine but it should offer them protection against severe disease.

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 common symptoms of COVID-19 are recent onset of any of the following:

- a new continuous cough
- a high temperature (37.8°C or above)
- a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell.

If you have any of the symptoms above, stay at home and arrange to have a test. For more information about COVID-19, and how to book a test visit

nhsinform.scot/covid19

How does the vaccine work?

The COVID-19 vaccine does not cause COVID-19. It helps to build up immunity to the virus, so your body will fight it off more easily if it affects you. This can reduce your risk of developing COVID-19 or, if you do get COVID-19, it can make the symptoms milder.

Consent

Young people should discuss the information in this leaflet with their parent or carer before the vaccination.

If you have any questions about having the vaccine, or would like more information, you can:

- visit [nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccineyoungpeople](https://www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccineyoungpeople)
- call the COVID-19 vaccination helpline on **0800 030 8013**
- talk to the vaccination staff, who will be happy to answer your questions.

We recommend you get agreement from your parent or carer but it is not always necessary.

For more information visit

[nhsinform.scot/consentunder16](https://www.nhsinform.scot/consentunder16)

Are there any reasons not to 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 severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to any of the ingredients in 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's important that you tell the person giving you your vaccine if you've ever had a serious allergic reaction.

The vaccine does not contain any animal products or egg.

For more information on vaccine ingredients, and links to the manufacturer's information leaflet, visit **nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine** or call **0800 030 8013**.

People with bleeding disorders or taking medication to thin their blood

People taking medication to thin the blood, such as warfarin, can safely get the COVID-19 vaccine as long as their treatment is stable. You should let the person giving you the vaccine know what medication you are on.

People with bleeding disorders should consult their specialist or their individual care plan for advice on vaccination.

Is the vaccine safe?

NHS Scotland will only use a vaccine if it meets the required standards of safety and effectiveness. All medicines, including vaccines, are tested for safety and effectiveness before they're allowed to be used. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has to assess all the data and also ensure a vaccine works and that all the necessary trials and checks have been completed.

The MHRA will only approve a vaccine for supply in the UK if the expected standards of safety, quality and efficacy are met.

The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine has been authorised for use for those aged 12 years and over in the UK, Europe and the USA. Millions of doses of the COVID-19 vaccine have been given worldwide. The vaccine is highly effective in children and young people.

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 for children and young people aged 12 to 17, side effects are more common with the second dose.

Very common side effects include:



having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection.

This tends to be worst around 1 to 2 days after the vaccination



general aches, or mild flu-like symptoms



feeling tired



headache.

You can rest and take paracetamol (follow the dose advice in the packaging) to help make you feel better.

Remember, do not take medicines that contain aspirin if you are under 16 years of age.

Although feeling feverish is not uncommon for 2 to 3 days, a high temperature after 2 to 3 days is unusual and may indicate you have COVID-19 or another infection. An uncommon side effect is swollen glands in the armpit or neck on the same side as the arm where you had the vaccine. This can last for around 10 days, but if it lasts longer see your doctor.

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 call **NHS24** free on **111**.

Are there other, more serious side effects?

Recently, cases of inflammation of the heart (called myocarditis or pericarditis) have been reported very rarely after COVID-19 vaccines. These rare adverse reactions are being closely evaluated by the MHRA.

Most of these cases have been in younger men and usually happen a few days after the second vaccination. Most people recovered and felt better following rest and simple treatments. Longer term follow-up is ongoing in the UK and elsewhere to better understand this reaction.

You should seek medical advice urgently if you experience:

- chest pain
- shortness of breath
- feelings of having a fast-beating, fluttering, or pounding heart.

Reporting side effects

You can report suspected side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine through the Yellow Card Scheme at **coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk**

This information is a guide only. Always get medical advice from **NHS24** free on **111** if you're worried about your health.

For more information about side effects, visit **nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccinesideeffects**

How to prepare for the vaccination

The COVID-19 vaccine is given as an injection in the upper arm. On the day of your vaccination, wear practical clothing so it's easy to access your upper arm.

If you have a fear of needles and are a bit nervous, let the person giving you your vaccine know – they will be very understanding and can support you by helping you feel calm.

Remember the needles used are small and you should only feel a tiny pinprick.

If you're ill on the day

You should still go for your COVID-19 vaccine if you have a minor illness without a fever. If you feel very unwell, your vaccine may be postponed until you have fully recovered.

If you're feeling unwell with symptoms of COVID-19, do not attend your vaccine appointment. You should self-isolate and book a COVID-19 test. This can be done at

[nhsinform.scot/testing](https://nhs.uk/inform-scot/testing)

I've had COVID-19 before, should I still get the vaccine?

Yes. Even if you've already had COVID-19, you could still get it again. The vaccine will reduce your risk of getting COVID-19. If you do get it again, the vaccine can reduce how serious the symptoms will be.

If you have recently tested positive for COVID-19 – even if you have no symptoms – you should wait until four weeks after the date you were tested to get the vaccine.

After the vaccine

After you've had your vaccine, it's important that you continue to follow the latest government guidance to help reduce the spread of the virus. It is not yet known whether having the vaccine completely stops you spreading the virus to others.

Further information

For more information on the COVID-19 vaccine offer for children and young people aged 12 to 17 years visit **nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccineyoungpeople** or call **0800 030 8013** (available 8am–8pm, 7 days a week).

You or your parents or carer should read the product information leaflet for more details on your vaccine, including possible side effects.



Translations



Easy read



BSL



Audio



Large print



Braille

For more information, including other formats and translation support:



www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine



0800 030 8013



p hs.otherformats@p hs.scot



Scan me

Information correct at time of publication.

Please visit www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccineyoungpeople for the most up-to-date information.

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www.nhsinform.scot/confidentiality
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www.informationgovernance.scot.nhs.uk/use-of-your-immunisation-data

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