

COVID-19

Vaccination

Parent information pack



COVID-19 Vaccine

All children aged 12-15 will be offered a **single dose** of the Comirnaty (Pfizer) COVID-19 vaccine as part of the secondary school immunisation programme. This will help to protect them from COVID-19.

Vaccinating students and young people should help to reduce the need to have time off school and to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 within schools. The vaccination programme will therefore help to reduce disruption of face-to-face education this winter.

Like all medicines, no vaccine is completely effective – some people may still get COVID-19 despite having a vaccination, but it should be less severe. The vaccines do not contain organisms that grow in the body, and so are safe for children and young people with disorders of the immune system. These people may not respond as well to the vaccine, but it should offer them protection against severe disease.

Vaccine side effects

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. Most of these are mild and short-lived, and not everyone gets them. With the vaccine we use in under-18s, side effects are more common with the second dose.

Very common side effects include:

- painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm at injection site
- feeling tired
- headache
- general aches, or mild flu like symptoms.

The above can be safely managed by consuming plenty of fluids or taking over-the-counter medicines such as Paracetamol and/or Ibuprofen (following the dosing instructions) and moving the arm. These symptoms usually resolve within 24-48 hours.

Less common side effects:

Following administration of the vaccine to protect against COVID-19 there have been very rare reports of the following side effects, usually a few days after the second dose:

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

Most symptoms are short-lived and will resolve spontaneously with some rest and simple treatments. However, should your son/daughter experience any of these symptoms, and you are concerned, please contact your GP or NHS 111 and explain that he/she has recently been vaccinated with the COVID-19 vaccine.

More information about the COVID-19 vaccination can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/COVID-19-vaccination-resources-for-children-and-young-people/COVID-19-vaccination-a-guide-for-eligible-children-and-young-people-aged-12-to-17#consent>

Consent

How does the consent process work?

All parents, or those with parental responsibility, are asked to consent for the young person eligible for the vaccine. We encourage this decision to be made jointly with the young person or following a conversation about the vaccine together as a family.

You will receive a link to complete an electronic consent form, which needs to be submitted at least 1 working day prior to your child's school session so the team has a full list of children with consent to vaccinate. If you do not wish for your child to be vaccinated, then choose the no consent option on the same form.

Some older children may be deemed mature enough to provide their own consent. This sometimes occurs if a parent has not completed a consent form, but the child still wishes to have the vaccine on the day of the session. In this case, every effort will be made to contact the parent to seek your verbal consent prior to any vaccination being given. This is a well-established process which is used in other school-based vaccination programmes.

What happens if I do not consent, but my child wants to be vaccinated?

Young people who understand fully what is involved in a proposed procedure, such as vaccination, can legally give consent. This is known as 'Gillick competence'.

Trained professionals within the school aged immunisation team, with expertise in vaccinating children, will speak to the young person to assess their understanding of the benefits and risks to the vaccine, before allowing them to self-consent.

No child will be coerced into consent; his/her consent must be voluntary to be legal. We do not proactively encourage young people to have the vaccine without parental consent. Where consent is not received, and the child is not Gillick competent or does not want to be vaccinated, the immunisation will not be given.

Handy tips for preparing your child for their COVID-19 vaccination

- Ensure your child tells us on the day if they have had a confirmed positive COVID-19 PCR test as the vaccination cannot be given for 28 days.
- Encourage them to have breakfast and drink regularly throughout the school day.
- Ask them to wear a short-sleeved and loose-fitting top to allow us to get to the top of their arm. The injection is usually given in the arm they do not write with.
- If they are known to suffer with needle phobia, or are prone to fainting, please speak to the school as we can arrange for your child to be vaccinated earlier within the day and make adaptations to make it easier for them.
- Help them with strategies for staying calm during the vaccination such as controlled breathing.
- Let your child know what's going to happen in simple language – for example, "you may feel a sharp scratch, but it will go away very fast".

COVID-19 Vaccine FAQs

Is the vaccine safe?

Millions of children around the world have had a COVID-19 vaccine. The medicines regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), has confirmed the 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 vaccine continues to be closely monitored to make sure it is safe and effective.

Where can I find information on COVID-19 vaccination for children and adults?

The NHS leaflets provide more information for parents and children on the vaccine, including how it works and what to expect after the COVID-19 vaccination. There are accessible versions of the consent form and leaflets available for those with a learning disability or who live with autism. There are braille and British Sign Language (BSL) videos to order or download. Translations will also be available.

- [COVID-19 vaccination – A guide for children and young people](#)
- [What to expect after your COVID-19 vaccination – Advice for children and young people](#)

When will the vaccinations be given?

The COVID-19 vaccinations for children aged 12-15 will run across all secondary schools until late November. You will be provided with the date of your child's planned school session by their school.

What if my child is not in on the day the service visits?

Do not worry. If your child is absent on the day we visit, but you have filled out the consent form, our service will be in touch with details of alternative venues your child can visit to get the vaccine. These may be part of a pop-up clinic or at a vaccination centre. All young people with parental consent will be offered the opportunity to be vaccinated.

What if my child doesn't want the vaccine currently but changes their mind after the vaccination date?

There will be future opportunities for young people to be vaccinated outside of this programme. Keep checking our Healthy Together, LPT and CCG websites for more information as it is announced.

Who will be giving the vaccine to the children?

The programme will be delivered by an NHS commissioned school age immunisation service (SAIS). The team includes experienced and specially trained nurses, healthcare support workers and administrative staff. The team will administer the vaccination according to nationally agreed standards. Staff are appropriately qualified, trained (including in safeguarding) and experienced in vaccinating children and young people. Staff administering the vaccine will be wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

What about those children turning 12 years of age within the school year, but are still 11?

We will only offer the vaccination to children aged 12 years and over on the day of the school visit (rather than offering the vaccine to everyone in year 7, where young people could be 12 or 11). If your child is turning 12 before or on the date of the vaccination session, they can still have the vaccine. Please fill out the consent form.

If your child is turning 12 after the vaccination sessions at schools have ended, then they will not be able to have the vaccine as part of this year's school vaccine programme. However, the situation is ongoing and developing, so please keep checking back on the Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust website for any updates on potential future clinics for this age group.

Can my child have the vaccine if they have recently tested positive for COVID-19?

If your child has tested positive for COVID-19, **they need to wait 28 days before they can have a COVID-19 vaccine.** Having the vaccine will still give them enhanced protection, even if they've already had COVID-19.

My child has allergies / health conditions. Can they still have the vaccine?

There are very few children who cannot receive the vaccine. Most people with allergies (including food or penicillin allergies) can be vaccinated against COVID-19. The only very rare exception is if the child is allergic to any of the vaccine ingredients. (You can find these in the [patient information leaflet on the gov.uk website](#)).

If you are unsure, please discuss this with your child's GP.

If my child has the vaccine is there a chance it will affect a PCR test?

No – a PCR test looks for live genetic material of the virus. This is not contained in the vaccine and therefore will not cause a positive PCR test result.

Our faith means we don't eat animal products. Is the COVID-19 vaccine suitable?

Yes – Comirnaty (Pfizer) does not contain egg or animal products.

Does the vaccine affect fertility or the female cycle?

The vaccine does not affect a person's long-term fertility.

We have seen reports of menstrual changes after having the COVID vaccine (lighter or heavier than usual, earlier or later). This is probably due to an immune reaction in the lining of the womb and/or changes in the hormones that trigger a period, in the same way that being poorly or stressed can create changes to the menstrual cycle. We know this is a temporary effect that disappears within one to two cycles.

There is no plausible reason of how the vaccine could have long-term or permanent effects on fertility. What's more, we have seen many women have successful pregnancies throughout vaccine trials and in our wider society, after receiving the vaccine.

What is happening with other vaccinations this year – such as HPV or flu?

These vaccinations will still take place, however they will happen later in the year, so the COVID-19 vaccination programme can take place. Further updates on this will be sent to your school in due course.

How to contact us

Call: **0300 3000 007**

Email: communityimmunisations.service@nhs.net