

Child and Youth COVID-19 Vaccine Fact Sheet

Here are 10 things to know about the COVID-19 vaccination for children and youth aged 12 to 17.

1. Vaccination for children and youth 12 years and up is safe and effective.

Vaccines are safe, effective and the best way to be protected from COVID-19.

Health Canada has authorized the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for youth ages 12 to 17 and has determined it is safe in youth with no serious side effects.

Close to 3 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine have already been given to those aged 12 to 17 in the United States. No serious side effects have been identified in this age group.

In clinical trials, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has been demonstrated to be highly effective at protecting against COVID-19 for individuals 12 and over. Youth can often have very good immune response following vaccination, resulting in strong protection.

2. Children, like adults, may experience temporary side effects.

The side effects after receiving a vaccination are different for every person, and most are mild and easily tolerated.

Your child might notice tenderness or pain where the vaccine was given in the upper arm. They could also feel fatigue, headache, achy muscles or joints, and fever and chills. These side effects generally clear up within 1 to 3 days. They are also a positive sign that the vaccine is beginning to work.

3. Vaccines are important for children and youth because they can get infected with COVID-19 and spread it to others, even if they don't have symptoms.

Children who get COVID-19 typically experience mild symptoms – however, others can get very sick, require hospitalization and experience more serious and longer-lasting symptoms. In very rare cases, the virus can also cause death in children. Children can also spread the disease to others who may be at higher risk of illness.

4. The vaccine is very safe for most people, including anyone who has a medical condition.

Individuals taking medications that weakens their immune system or those with allergies to any of the vaccine

ingredients should consult with their health care provider. COVID-19 vaccines do not contain eggs, gelatin (pork), gluten, latex, preservatives, antibiotics or aluminum.

Because people who have medical conditions are often at higher risk of becoming more ill if they are infected with COVID we strongly encourage these individuals to be vaccinated as soon as possible.

As with adults, allergic reactions to the vaccine are rare. Symptoms include hives, swelling of the face, tongue or throat, or difficulty breathing.

Once vaccinated, individuals are required to stay at the clinic for 15 to 30 minutes after the vaccination to monitor and treat an allergic reaction if one occurs.

Health Canada has not yet approved COVID-19 vaccines for children under 12 years old.

5. You can't get COVID-19 from the vaccine.

The Pfizer-BioNtech COVID-19 vaccine tells your body how to make a harmless protein found on the COVID-19 virus and start building antibodies against it, so that your immune system will know how to recognize and fight the real virus if you come in contact with it.

6. If your child already had COVID-19, they can still get the vaccine.

Although a prior COVID-19 infection may provide some protection from getting sick again, we do not know how long that protection will last, and it may

not protect against new variants. If you are recovering from COVID-19, you should delay getting the vaccine until most of your symptoms are gone and you are no longer in self-isolation.

7. A health card is not needed.

If your child does not have a health card, you may need to book your appointment over the phone instead of online, and you can speak to your school, medical provider or faith leader to get a letter stating your child's name, date of birth and address.

If your child has a health card, they should bring it to the appointment.

8. The COVID-19 vaccine should be given alone and apart from other vaccines, if possible.

Other vaccines should be scheduled 14 days before or 28 days after the COVID-19 vaccine. If you are behind on your child's immunizations, please contact their health care provider to make a plan to get up to date on all your vaccines.

9. Vaccines are provided with informed consent.

COVID-19 vaccines are only provided if informed consent is received from the individual, including those aged 12 to 17, and as long as they have the capability to make this decision. This means understanding the treatment, why it is being recommended, and the risks and benefits if they accept or refuse to be vaccinated. If the individual is incapable of consenting to receiving

the vaccine, they would need consent from their substitute decision-maker, such as their parent or legal guardian.

The health care provider and family must respect a young person's decision regarding vaccination. Parents and guardians are encouraged to discuss vaccination with their children prior to attending a clinic. COVID-19 vaccination is voluntary for anyone eligible in Ontario.

10. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine will help your child resume the activities they enjoy and that support their mental health and wellbeing.

Vaccination is an important tool to help stop the spread of COVID-19 and allow students and families to safely resume normal activities.

When enough people are protected from COVID-19, the risk of infection for your child will begin to decline.

Vaccines, along with mask-wearing, physical distancing and other precautions, will help protect the health of the broader community.

Only after rates of COVID-19 in the broader community are low will normal activities for children and youth be possible again.

For more information and resources about COVID-19 and vaccines:

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