

COVID-19 Vaccines

Youth 12–17



April 11, 2023

Benefits of Staying Up To Date with Vaccines

It is important for everyone to stay up to date with their vaccinations as this is the best protection from getting very sick. Vaccination continues to:

- Lower the risk of becoming seriously sick from COVID-19, ending up in hospital, or dying. Protect against [long COVID](#), which is when symptoms last for weeks or months.
- Make activities like school, sports, and hanging out with friends and family safer.

[Staying up to date](#) means:

- Everyone 5 years and older complete a primary series and get a booster dose on or after September 1, 2022.
 - The booster dose is given 6 months after the last COVID-19 vaccine dose or a COVID-19 infection.
 - Anyone who did not get a booster after September 1st is still eligible for a booster this spring.

Youth are recommended to get a bivalent booster now if they did not get one in Fall 2022. Even if they had COVID-19 in the past, they should still get vaccinated 6 months after an infection to benefit from hybrid immunity (combined protection from being vaccinated for COVID-19 and a past COVID-19 infection).

How the Vaccine Works

mRNA vaccines teach our immune system to make antibodies that protect us from COVID-19. The vaccines do not stay in the body for a long time, do not contain the COVID-19 virus and cannot give us COVID-19. It takes at least two weeks after getting the vaccine to be protected. Even if you had COVID 19 in the past, getting vaccinated provides stronger and longer-lasting protection.

mRNA vaccines are safe for all youth including people who:

- Have a health condition.
- Are taking medication, pregnant or breastfeeding, recently had COVID.

The Pfizer-BioNTech bivalent vaccine is the preferred and recommended booster for youth 12 to 17 years of age. A bivalent booster targets two strains of COVID-19 (the original and Omicron variant) and can provide stronger protection against Omicron.

Youth who have a weak immune system should speak to a health care provider about which mRNA vaccine is recommended for them. Youth who are 12 to 17 years of age and have a weak immune system may be offered the Moderna Bivalent vaccine with informed consent.

Informed Consent

Youth should talk to a parent or trusted adult about the benefits and risks of getting the vaccine.

Youth might not need their parents' consent (or permission) to get vaccinated if they are 12 years or older and able to: understand information about the vaccine, why it is recommended and what will happen if they get or don't get the vaccine. Students under 14 years old who get vaccinated at a school clinic during school hours need parent consent.



Wait to Get Vaccinated if:

You have COVID-19 or symptoms. To get the best protection you should:

- Wait at least eight weeks from when your symptoms started or you tested positive (if you are getting your primary series); or,
- Wait at least six months (if you are getting a booster).

Learn about when to get vaccinated [after having COVID-19](#).

Vaccine Ingredients and Allergies

The vaccines contain lipids (fats), salts, sugars and buffers. They do not contain eggs, gelatin (pork), gluten, latex, preservatives, antibiotics, or aluminum. The vaccines are safe even if you have food, medication or environmental allergies.

Speak with a health care provider first if you are allergic to polyethylene glycol (PEG). Allergic reactions, including serious reactions (anaphylaxis), are rare. Allergic reactions can be treated and are usually temporary. Get medical help if you have trouble breathing, or develop hives or swelling in the face and throat.

Side Effects and Risks

About one in five people have side effects from the vaccine. Most are mild to moderate, and last one to three days. Side effects usually mean that the vaccine is working to build your immune system.

Common Side Effects Include:

- redness, pain, itching or swelling at the injection site
- fever
- headache
- feeling tired
- muscle aches
- joint pain
- chills
- nausea and/or vomiting

Myocarditis and Pericarditis

Myocarditis and pericarditis (types of heart inflammation) can occur after getting COVID-19 infection and can be serious. It can happen after getting vaccinated but it is rare. If it occurs after vaccination, it is mild and gets better on its own within a few days. Get medical attention if you develop chest pain, shortness of breath, or your heart is pounding/racing in the first few weeks after vaccination. Vaccination is still recommended as the benefits are greater than any risk.

For people five – 29 years of age, Pfizer is the preferred vaccine for the primary series because of lower risk of myocarditis and pericarditis.

Myocarditis and pericarditis are less common after booster doses.

COVID-19 and Other Vaccines

It is safe to get other vaccines at the same time or before or after your COVID-19 vaccine.

Consult a Health Care Provider to discuss vaccination options, if you:

- Have a weak immune system.
- Take medications that weaken your immune system – you may want to time your vaccination with your medications.
- Had an allergic reaction four hours after receiving a previous COVID-19 vaccine dose.
- Have severe allergies to any of the vaccine ingredients.
- Had Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (MIS-C).

For more information: Talk to your health care provider and visit toronto.ca/COVID19