



COVID-19 Vaccines – Children age 5 to 11

April 2023

Children & COVID-19

It is important for children to stay up to date with vaccinations (including fall/winter boosters). COVID-19 vaccination continues to:

- Lower the risk of becoming seriously sick from COVID-19. Healthy children have been hospitalized from COVID-19. Vaccination protects from serious complications.
- Protect against long COVID. In children, long COVID can cause difficulty concentrating (such as having new difficulties learning at school).
- Make child care, school, and other activities safer.

COVID-19 Vaccines for Children

The Health Canada mRNA vaccines approved for children 5-11 are:

- Pediatric Pfizer-BioNTech (10 mcg)
- Moderna Spikevax (50 mcg)
- Pfizer-BioNTech Bivalent booster (10 mcg)

These mRNA vaccines for children are:

- Safe and effective, including for children with a health condition, such as allergies, asthma, diabetes or a weak immune system.
- Carefully monitored with millions of doses of the Pediatric Pfizer vaccine given worldwide.
- A smaller dose than for people age 12 and older.

The Pediatric Pfizer-BioNTech is the preferred vaccine in this age group. For a child with a very weak immune system, the Moderna vaccine may be considered.

How the Vaccine Works

- mRNA vaccines teach our immune system to make antibodies that protect us from COVID-19.
- The vaccines do not contain the COVID-19 virus, so your child cannot get an infection from the vaccine.
- It takes at least two weeks after each vaccine dose to have protection.
- A primary series and a booster are needed for your child to be up-to-date with their COVID-19 vaccines

- A primary series is two doses. Children who have a very weak immune system should get a three dose primary series. The recommended time between doses is 8 weeks.
- A booster dose should be given at least 168 days (6 months) after the last dose of the primary series or COVID-19 infection.
- A bivalent booster targets two strains of COVID-19 (the original and Omicron variant) and can provide stronger protection against Omicron. With informed [consent](#) a monovalent vaccine may still be used as a booster.
- If a child had COVID-19 in the past, they should still get vaccinated 6 months after their infection to benefit from hybrid immunity (combined protection from being vaccinated for COVID-19 and a past COVID-19 infection).

Vaccine Ingredients and Allergies

The mRNA vaccines contains lipids (fats), salts, sugars and buffers. They do not contain eggs, gelatin (pork), gluten, latex, preservatives, antibiotics, or aluminum. These vaccines are safe for children with food, medication or environmental allergies. Speak with a health care provider if your child is allergic to polyethylene glycol (PEG) or tromethamine (Tris). Allergic reactions, including serious reactions (anaphylaxis), are rare. Allergic reactions can be treated and are usually temporary. Get medical help if your child has trouble breathing, or develops hives or swelling in the face and throat.

Side Effects and Risks

Side effects in children are similar to those in youth and adults. They are usually mild, and last one to three days. Side effects usually mean that the vaccine is working. Common side effects include:

- redness, swelling or pain where the vaccine was given
- headache
- feeling tired
- joint pain and/or muscle aches
- chills and/or fever
- nausea and/or vomiting

Get medical attention if your child has a high fever (over 40°C) or side effects that last more than three days after vaccination.

Myocarditis and Pericarditis

Myocarditis and pericarditis (types of heart inflammation) can occur after a COVID-19 infection and can be serious. In rare cases, it can occur after getting vaccinated but it is milder and gets better usually within a few days. Get medical attention if your child develops chest pain, shortness of breath, or a racing heart a few weeks after vaccination. Vaccination is still recommended as the benefits are greater than any risk.

Wait to Get Vaccinated

Getting vaccinated is still strongly recommended even if your child had a COVID-19 infection. If your child has symptoms of COVID-19 or has tested positive for COVID-19, you should wait until they are feeling better to get them vaccinated. If self-isolation is required, children should wait until the isolation period is over. To maximize their immune response, it is recommended to wait 8 weeks from when their symptoms started or they tested positive to get vaccinated. If getting a booster dose, wait 12 weeks.

COVID-19 and other Vaccines

It is safe to get other vaccines including the seasonal influenza vaccine at the same time as your COVID-19 vaccine. Speak with a health care provider to determine the benefits and risks of getting a COVID-19 vaccine with other vaccines.

Consult a Health Care Provider if your Child:

- Takes medications that weaken their immune system – you may want to time the vaccination with their medications.
- Had an allergic reaction four hours after getting their first COVID-19 vaccine dose.
- Has severe allergies to any of the vaccine ingredients.
- Had Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (MIS-C).

Informed Consent to Get the Vaccine

Parent/guardian [consent](#) is required for a child age 5 – 11 years old to get vaccinated.

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