


FACT-CINATION

Know the facts about the vax

Get the information you need to help support your decision about your child's COVID-19 vaccination

This information guide has been produced to help point parents and carers to reliable sources of information regarding the COVID-19 vaccination now it is being offered to 5 to 11 year olds. Where you see blue text followed by a  icon, this indicates a link that you can click on to find out more.

How does a vaccine work?

Vaccines are medicines that can prepare the body to fight off different bacteria or viruses (microbes). They contain small parts of microbes (usually made in the lab, but sometimes dead/inactive parts of microbes are used). Newer vaccines (mRNA vaccines and the viral vector vaccines) contain the instructions to make part of the microbe.

When you are vaccinated, these parts of the microbe trigger your immune system to produce antibodies. Antibodies stick to the surface of the microbe and kill or disable them. Once antibodies have been made, they remain in the bloodstream for a period of time, so if the same bacteria or virus invades the body again, the immune response will be quicker and the infection will be less severe.

Vaccines also help the body remember the microbe for the future via the cells that are part of the immune system (called "immunological memory").


 [Vaccines and immunisation: What is vaccination? \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int)

 [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccines - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

What will the vaccine do?

If you are vaccinated, you may still catch the virus, but you will be likely to have mild or no symptoms and you are less likely to pass the virus on to other people, other benefits are:

- for most people **vaccination** against COVID-19 will induce **more effective** and **longer lasting immunity** than that induced by natural infection with the virus
- having the vaccine may **reduce** the time young people feel unwell or are infectious
- having the vaccine will give **baseline** immunity to protect against the virus if it changes again and becomes more serious for children and young people

Even if you've had COVID-19, you're recommended to get the vaccine because it will **boost** whatever immunity you have from natural infection ([The British Society for Immunology](#)). 

Is it safe for children?

The UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) confirmed in December 2021 that the Pfizer vaccine is **safe** and **effective** for 5 to 11 year olds. The vaccine is designed for this age group and given at a lower dose than older children (10 micrograms rather than 30 micrograms).


As with all vaccines, there is a chance of side effects. Not everyone gets them, and if they do, they are mild and only last a couple of days.

Side effects can include:

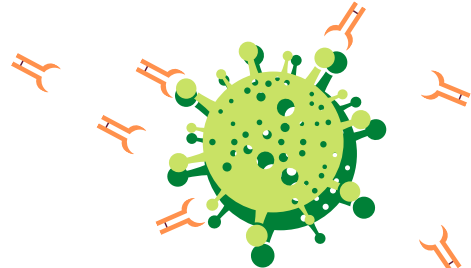
- a sore arm from the injection
- feeling tired
- a headache
- feeling achy
- feeling or being sick

There have been reports of serious side effects such as allergic reactions, blood clots or mild cases of heart inflammation, called myocarditis, in adolescents and young adults. This is a very rare side effect in teenagers, particularly boys and can lead to the need for medical treatment. This side effect has not been seen in younger children with lower doses so far. These are extremely rare, and the complications are more common with COVID-19 infection than as the result of a vaccination.

How do you report side effects?

The MHRA requests that all suspected side effects from COVID-19 vaccines are reported via the dedicated coronavirus [Yellow Card site](#). 

The purpose of the Yellow Card Scheme is to provide an early warning that the safety profile of a product requires further investigation.





How has the vaccine been developed so quickly?

Developing a vaccine can be a slow process, taking around 10 years to develop a new vaccine from scratch. The urgent need across the world for COVID-19 vaccines allowed these to be developed much more quickly.

- Scientists **shared information** around the world, using research already carried out looking at outbreaks of other viruses
- There was **existing research** looking at the development of vaccines against other coronaviruses
- Large amounts of **funding** was made available from governments
- Scientists were able to begin manufacture of vaccines **at the same time** as the on-going trial phases
- Finally, there was a **huge response** from people who were willing to be participants in the vaccine trials

All the COVID-19 vaccines have now been used in **hundreds of millions of people globally**, so there is **more information** available for these vaccines than many others used for a longer time.

 [Public Health expert Dr Alex Bowmer explains how the COVID-19 vaccine has been developed so quickly](#) 

 [BBC News: How does a vaccine get approved?](#) 

 [Hear from a vaccine trial participant](#) 



What is the benefit to children of COVID-19 vaccines?

In December 2021, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advised that children aged 5-11 years in a clinical risk group be offered a vaccination. In February 2022, the JCVI advised the offer of a non-urgent vaccination to all 5-11 year olds as a one-off pandemic response.

Overall, the committee concluded that the benefits from vaccination were marginally greater than the potential known harms. Evidence indicates that in comparison to other age groups children aged 5-11 are at the lowest risk from COVID-19. The benefits of vaccination in preventing school absence are very dependent on the timing and severity of another wave of COVID-19. If new variants of COVID-19 are identified, being vaccinated may help reduce how ill children feel and provide some baseline immunity to boost future vaccinations.

Read the JCVI recommendation [here](#) 

More information links

 [Watch Sonia from the NHS Youth Forum ask about the safety of the vaccine](#) 

 [BBC newsround: Vaccines now available for 5 to 11 year olds](#) 

 [UKHSA guide for parents of children aged 5-11](#) 

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LifeLab is supported by the National Institute for Health Research Southampton Biomedical Research Centre. The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the NIHR.


The LifeLab team produces educational programmes and resources to enable young people to understand the health messages they receive through their own scientific discovery.

Find out more about us at lifelabonline.org


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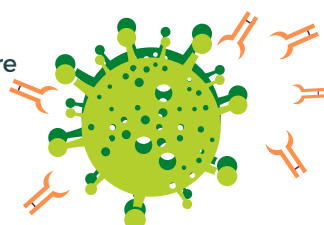
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How are the vaccinations being administered?

The majority of vaccines for 5 to 11 year olds will take place at local vaccination centres or community pharmacies outside of school hours and will be available to book through the [online booking service](#)  or by calling 119 free of charge between 8am and 8pm seven days a week.

There are also vaccine walk-ins centre across the country which people can attend without an appointment.

Families can find out more about walk in vaccine centres on [the NHS website here](#). 



Do parents need to give consent?

Consent is an important part of vaccination. At the appointment you and your child will be given the opportunity to ask questions prior to taking consent from you and your child.

You can view a consent form online to help your discussion.

[The form is available to view here.](#) 


As consent will be obtained on the day it is not necessary to print and sign the form in advance.

Why is it still important to reduce the spread of COVID-19?

A vaccinated person will have a less severe illness, but could still catch and carry the virus. So, even after being vaccinated, it is really important to keep thinking about your choices to keep yourself and your families and communities safe. Although domestic restrictions have been lifted in England you are still encouraged to let fresh air in if meeting indoors, or meet outside, consider wearing a face covering in crowded, enclosed spaces and get tested if you have COVID-19 symptoms, and stay at home if positive.






Where can I get reliable information?

There is a lot of information out there and a lot of misinformation online. This is particularly true on social media, with false information aimed at young people. To assess whether you can trust the information you are reading you should use the **CLUED UP*** check list:

- **C**redible – Does the content come from a **trusted/reliable source** that you'd reasonably expect to be an authority on the subject?
- **L**ogical – Does the content seem like it is **realistic**? If a piece of content seems to be unrealistic and doesn't provide any evidence, you should consider carefully whether it is **factual** and real.
- **U**nemotional – Does the content appeal to your sense of reason, or does it **play on your emotions**? If we are shocked or scared by what we are reading, it leads us to ignore any doubts we may have about the credibility of the content.
- **E**videnced – Does the information **provide sources or evidence** to back up the claims that it makes?
- **i**dentifiable – Is the information definitely coming from the organisation or individual that you think it is? The rise of bots and fake accounts, provides individuals with an opportunity to **spread disinformation** by **pretending to be a credible source**. Check the profile or bio of an individual or organisation producing content, to look for signs that they are who they claim to be. 
- **U**p-to-date – Has the information been **published or updated recently**. We are still learning things about COVID-19, so make sure you have the most up-to-date information.
- **P**urpose – Does the individual or organisation publishing the information have a **motive** for doing so other than simply telling the truth? Are they trying to **persuade** you to believe a particular point of view?

*CLUED UP Resource from the Royal Society for Public Health 


More sources of information

- COVID-19 Vaccines - Oxford Vaccine Group 
- COVID-19 Vaccine Misinformation Toolkit | DCMS (dcmsblog.uk) 
- Coronavirus: False vaccine claims debunked (BBC) 
- Meet the scientists tackling vaccine misinformation on TikTok 
- Public Health Expert Dr Alex Bowmer answers questions about COVID-19 vaccine 

Fact check



Can the vaccine affect fertility?

There is absolutely no evidence, and no theoretical reason, that any of the vaccines can affect the fertility of women or men. (The British Fertility Society) 

Does the vaccine contain animal products?

The vaccines do not contain anything of animal origin.

Here are some more FAQs from NHS sites across the UK, who have produced answers for young people:

- COVID-19 Vaccinations Frequently Asked Questions - Hampshire 
- COVID-19 Vaccinations FAQs - Norfolk 
- COVID-19 Vaccinations FAQs - Northern Ireland 
- COVID-19 Vaccinations FAQs - Wales 

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