

# COVID-19 VACCINE FOR CHILDREN 5 TO 11 YEARS

November 23, 2021

The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine has now been approved for use in children aged 5 to 11 years by Health Canada. This is the first COVID-19 vaccine authorized in Canada for use in this age group and marks a major milestone in Canada's fight against COVID-19. Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect children from getting COVID-19. The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) will begin offering the vaccine at community clinics November 26, 2021.

## Who is eligible for the vaccine

Children born between 2010 and 2016 are now eligible to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech children's COVID-19 vaccine (10 mcg). Two doses of the vaccine are recommended with at least 8 weeks between the first and second dose. It is recommended that the COVID-19 vaccine be given to your child 14 days before or after any other vaccines. Speak with your health care provider if you have questions.

## How to get the vaccine

If your child is eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine, it will be available at:

- community clinic locations:
  - by booking through the [COVID-19 vaccination portal](#)
  - by calling the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at [1-833-943-3900](tel:1-833-943-3900) (TTY for people who are deaf, hearing-impaired, or speech-impaired: [1-866-797-0007](tel:1-866-797-0007))
- [participating pharmacies](#) and health care providers offering children's Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine
- Ontario [GOVAXX bus](#)

## The benefits of vaccination

Vaccines are safe, effective and the best way to stay protected from COVID-19 and the highly contagious Delta variant. Vaccines have helped us safely get back to the places and things we love, such as going to school, participating in recreation and leisure activities, going to restaurants and concerts, and shopping. Vaccines make these places safer for everyone, including those who cannot get vaccinated, or who are at increased risk of getting very sick.

The following are some benefits of vaccinating children for COVID-19:

- There is a lower risk of your child becoming infected with COVID-19 and spreading it to others.
- It protects your child from getting very sick from COVID-19 and potential complications, hospitalization and death (although these risks are low, there are both short and [long-term health complications](#) from COVID-19 recorded in children).
- If your child is exposed to COVID-19 and they are fully vaccinated, they do not need to self-isolate unless they develop symptoms.
- By getting children vaccinated we are getting closer to community immunity.

Children have experienced harms from the pandemic. School disruptions, social isolation and interrupted activities have had impacts on the mental and physical well-being of children and their families. Children are most frequently exposed to COVID-19 by a close contact, so it is important that they get fully vaccinated as soon as possible. Getting children vaccinated will help keep schools and other activities safe and help prevent COVID-19 related interruptions. Health Canada has determined that the child vaccine is safe, effective, made to the highest quality and shows a strong immune response to prepare a child's immune system to fight against COVID-19.

### YOU ARE INVITED!

#### Live virtual Q & A for parents on COVID-19 vaccinations for 5 to 11 year olds

**Featuring:** Dr. Colin Lee, SMDHU Associate Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Rania Harim, Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre Pediatrician, and Jocelyn Leworthy, Certified Child Life Specialist

**Details:** Wednesday, December 8, 2021, 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

The event will be hosted on Microsoft Teams and a link will be posted to our [webpage](#) closer to the date.

For more information, visit our [COVID-19 vaccination for children 5 to 11 years webpage](#).

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### How many doses will be needed for children?

A complete series of two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech children's COVID-19 vaccine (10 mcg) will be offered to children 5 to 11 years of age who do not have contraindications to the vaccine, with at least 8 weeks between the first and second dose. It is not known at this time if booster doses will be recommended for children in the future.

### Is the vaccine safe for my child?

When approving a vaccine, Health Canada reviews clinical trial data submitted by the manufacturer. Interim findings did not indicate any safety concerns. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization will continue to monitor and closely review emerging evidence regarding the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines in children and will update their recommendations as needed.

### Who gives consent for my child to receive the vaccine?

Anyone getting the COVID-19 vaccine, including children and youth, must provide informed consent. Informed consent means that you understand:

- What the vaccine involves (for example, how it is given and what possible side effects there may be)
- Why it is recommended
- The risks and benefits of getting or not getting it.

If an individual is unable to provide informed consent to receive the vaccine, they will need consent from someone who can decide on their behalf, such as a parent or legal guardian. It's preferred that children get their vaccine with a parent or legal guardian present at the clinic. If necessary, children can go with an alternative caregiver to get vaccinated. A parent or legal guardian must be available by phone to provide verbal consent and review health history.

### Is the vaccine for children 5 to 11 years different than for 12 years and over?

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is the same formula, the only difference is that children 5 to 11 years will get a lower dose (10 micrograms) than people aged 12 and over (30 micrograms). This is because children 5 to 11 years have smaller bodies and a stronger immune response, so they only need a small amount of vaccine to get the same protection, with less risk of side effects.

### What are the vaccine's side effects in children?

The following mild [side effects](#) were observed as part of the clinical trial in children ages 5 to 11 during the first day or two after getting the vaccine:

- Sore arm near the injection site
- Feeling more tired than usual
- Headache
- Achy muscles or joints
- Chills

There were no serious adverse events related to the vaccine reported as part of the clinical trial.

Although [very rare cases of myocarditis and pericarditis](#) (heart inflammation) have been reported after getting the COVID-19 mRNA vaccine in youth and young adults, the clinical trial in children ages 5 to 11 did not observe any cases during the vaccination period and through to three months after dose 2. Currently, more research is being done to explore the potential for this adverse event in children. It is important to know that the risk of myocarditis and pericarditis caused by COVID-19 infection is much higher than the risk following COVID-19 vaccination.

### How do I help my child have a positive vaccine experience?

Making a child's vaccination experience better and decreasing the amount of pain they may feel is very important. If a child has a bad experience getting a vaccine, they may not trust their healthcare provider and may not want to get any more vaccines or health care when needed in the future. There are many things that can reduce stress and anxiety for children and their parents. Having a chance to ask questions, choosing ways they can be most comfortable when getting a vaccine, and choosing things they can do to distract them can help make children's vaccination experience uneventful and even positive.

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For more information and tips to improve your child's vaccine experience, check out the SMDHU website and the following resources:

- [How to Talk to Kids about Getting Vaccinated](#)
- [Reduce vaccination pain in children](#) video series– About Kids Health
- [Tips to Improve your Child's Immunization Experience](#) - Toronto Public Health
- [Pain Management During Immunizations for Children](#) - Immunize Canada
- [The CARD System](#) – Help Eliminate Pain in Kids & Adults

## **I am not ready to get my child vaccinated yet, can I wait?**

COVID-19 vaccine is not mandatory. It is important that you get your questions answered and feel comfortable. That's why we encourage you to seek out information and speak to your health care provider if you have questions or concerns. You can also call the [COVID-19 Vaccine Consult Service](#) – a **by appointment judgement-free phone call** with a paediatric Registered Nurse from SickKids. The sooner children are vaccinated, the sooner they will be protected.

## **What if my child is not up to date on other vaccines?**

Children and youth who are not up to date on other vaccines can still receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

If you or your child are behind on immunizations, we encourage you to contact your health care provider to get up to date.

Children between five and 11 years of age are recommended to wait 14 days before or after the administration of another vaccine before getting their COVID-19 vaccine. Speak with your health care provider if you have questions.

## **Will the vaccine affect my child's fertility?**

No. Recently a myth around infertility circulated and spread on social media. It was centred around a belief that the spike protein in the vaccine is similar to one found in the placenta (the organ that gives a growing baby oxygen and nutrients), however the spike proteins are actually [completely different](#) and therefore any antibodies we make from the vaccine will not impact the placenta.

## **Are there any children who should not get the vaccine?**

If your child has a known severe allergy to any ingredients in the COVID-19 vaccine, they should not get it. If your child has a history of any severe allergic reactions or any type of immediate allergic reaction to a vaccine or injectable therapy, you should let the immunization staff at your child's vaccination appointment know so that your child can be monitored for at least 30 minutes after getting the vaccine.

Children who have a history of myocarditis unrelated to COVID-19 vaccination should consult their clinical care team for individual considerations and recommendations. If they are no longer under active care for myocarditis, they may receive the vaccine. Caregivers should be advised to seek medical attention for children if they develop symptoms including chest pain, shortness of breath, or palpitations following receipt of a COVID-19 vaccine.

## **My child had COVID-19, do they still need the vaccine?**

Yes, it is recommended as COVID-19 may not provide long-lasting immunity. Children who have previously been infected by COVID-19 may be offered two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine after they have recovered from the symptoms of COVID-19 and they are no longer considered infectious. Children with a history of Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (MIS-C) may receive the vaccine once they have recovered or once 90 days have past since they were diagnosed, whichever is longer.

## **What if my child turns 12 after receiving their first dose of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine (10 mcg)?**

Children who turn 12 prior to receiving their second dose of the COVID vaccine are recommended to receive the adult/adolescent formula of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine (30 mcg). However, if they receive the pediatric dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine (10 mcg) as their second dose after they turn 12, their series will be considered complete.