



## Common Questions about the COVID-19 Vaccine for Children Aged 5-11

### **Why should my child get the COVID-19 vaccine?**

The vaccine protects children from getting sick with COVID-19, including the highly contagious Delta variant. If children do get COVID-19, the vaccine will help protect them from serious illness, hospitalization and death. The vaccine also prevents children from spreading COVID-19 to other people, including people under 5 years old who can't get vaccinated and vulnerable seniors. When children are vaccinated, they can also safely return to in-person learning, extracurricular activities and seeing their family and friends. This helps improve children's mental health and well-being.

### **What is the risk of COVID-19 in children?**

While children and youth who get infected with COVID-19 typically experience mild symptoms, some can get very sick and/or require hospitalization. Some children can also experience more serious and longer lasting symptoms. This is known as long COVID and post-acute COVID-19 syndrome. In early studies about long COVID, 1 to 4 out of every 100 children with a COVID-19 infection had lasting symptoms. Symptoms include tiredness, headache, sore throat and loss of smell. Children can get long COVID even after mild illness from COVID-19.

### **Has the COVID-19 vaccine been tested for children and youth? How do I know it's safe?**

Health Canada has one of the most rigorous scientific review systems in the world. It only approves a vaccine if it is safe, effective and meets the highest manufacturing and quality standards. After a thorough and independent scientific review of the evidence, Health Canada determined that the COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective at providing a strong immune response against COVID-19 in children and youth.

### **Do children aged 5-11 get the same dose amount of the COVID-19 vaccine as other age groups?**

No. Children aged 5-11 receive a lower dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. It is 10 micrograms, which is one-third of the size of the vaccine given to people aged 12 and older. In clinical studies for children, the 10-microgram dose was optimal for producing a strong immune response while minimizing side effects in children aged 5-11.

### **How many doses do children aged 5-11 need?**

Children aged 5-11 need two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine for full protection. The second dose should be administered 8 weeks after the first dose.

### **What are the common side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine in children?**

A sore or red arm, tiredness, chills, headache and/or a mild fever. These side effects go away after a few hours or a few days. In clinical studies, many children had mild side effects after getting the vaccine. These side effects are part of the body's efforts to build immunity to COVID-19 after vaccination.

### **What are the serious side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine in children?**

No new serious side effects were seen in clinical studies for children. Serious side effects, like anaphylaxis (a severe allergy), are rare. For every 1 million Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine doses given to people aged 12 and older, there are 2 to 8 cases of anaphylaxis. Myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) and/or pericarditis (inflammation of lining outside the heart) can happen rarely after the COVID-19 vaccine. These conditions are more likely for young adult males aged 18-30 after the second dose of the vaccine. The conditions are usually mild and treated with rest and anti-inflammatory medicines. Myocarditis and/or pericarditis are 16 times more likely to occur after a COVID-19 infection than after COVID-19 vaccines.

### **What are the long-term side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine in children?**

Long-term side effects are not expected from the COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccine side effects typically happen in the first 6 weeks. mRNA vaccines have been studied in humans since 2013 with no known long-term effects.

### **Does the COVID-19 vaccine cause myocarditis and/or pericarditis in children and youth?**

A very small number of cases of myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) and/or pericarditis (inflammation of lining outside the heart) after vaccination in children and youth have been reported. Most cases occurred in young adult males aged 18-30 after the second dose of vaccine. The conditions are usually mild and treated with rest and anti-inflammatory medicines. The Canadian Immunization Guide defines myocarditis and/or pericarditis after the COVID-19 vaccine as a rare Adverse Event Following Immunization (AEFI), which means it occurs at a frequency of 0.01% to less than 0.1%. Myocarditis and/or pericarditis are 16 times more likely to occur after a COVID-19 infection than after COVID-19 vaccines.

### **Will the COVID-19 vaccine impact my child's fertility?**

COVID-19 vaccines do not cause male or female infertility and there is no evidence to suggest that they will cause future infertility. There have been reports of short-term menstrual cycle changes, but vaccines do not impact fertility, genes (DNA) or hormone levels.

### **What is in the COVID-19 vaccine for children aged 5-11?**

The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine contains mRNA. mRNA instructs your cells to make the Covid-19 spike protein. A lipid (fat) envelope protects the mRNA while it is getting into cells. The COVID-19 vaccine for children has slightly different sugars and salts, so it can be stored in the fridge longer. The vaccine does not contain any COVID-19 virus. It cannot cause a COVID-19 infection. It is considered halal and does not contain any blood products.

### **My child already had and recovered from COVID-19. Should they still get the vaccine?**

Yes. People of all ages, including children, should get the COVID-19 vaccine even if they previously had COVID-19. Getting vaccinated gives children longer lasting and more durable protection against COVID-19, including the variants of concern. This reduces the risk of reinfection.

### **My child is 11 years old and turning 12 soon. Should I wait until they turn 12 so they can get the higher adult-sized dose of the COVID-19 vaccine?**

No. In clinical studies, children who are 11 years old had a very robust immune response and lower risk of side effects with the 10-microgram child-sized dose. For this reason, children who are 11 years old should get the vaccine that is available to them now. If a child turns 12 before their second dose, they can safely get the adult-sized dose for their second dose.

### **My child does not have a health card. Can they still get the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Yes. If your child does not have a health card, you can bring an ID or document with their name and date of birth to the vaccine appointment. This includes a passport, birth certificate, landing paper, school data form or yellow immunization card. You can also bring a letter from your child's school, medical provider or faith leader that confirms the child's name, date of birth and address.

### **Where can my child aged 5-11 get vaccinated in East Toronto?**

- Book an appointment at the Thorncliffe Park Community Hub clinic (45 Overlea Blvd) at [tehn.ca/VaccineAppointment](https://tehn.ca/VaccineAppointment) or call 437-537-5131.
- Book an appointment at another children's vaccine clinic in Ontario at [covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine](https://covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine) or call 1-833-943-3900.
- Michael Garron Hospital and East Toronto Health Partners are also operating vaccine clinics at schools in East Toronto. If your child goes to one of these schools, you will receive information about these clinics from the school's principal.

### **I have multiple children aged 5-11 who need to get the COVID-19 vaccine. Can I bring them to one appointment so they can get vaccinated at the same time?**

Yes. If you make an appointment for one child aged 5-11 at the Thorncliffe Park Community Hub clinic (45 Overlea Blvd), you can bring your other children who are aged 5-11 to the same appointment time. For each child, please bring their health card or another ID or document with their name and date of birth.

### **Will children receive proof that they are vaccinated?**

Yes. Vaccine certificates with QR codes will be available for children aged 5-11 on the Ontario government's website ([covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine](https://covid-19.ontario.ca/book-vaccine)). However, children aged 5-11 do not need to show proof of vaccination in Ontario to use different services. There may be different requirements in other regions.

### **How can I prepare my child for their vaccine appointment?**

In the weeks and days before your child's vaccine appointment:

- **Talk to your child about the COVID-19 vaccine and why it's important.** If you've received the vaccine, tell your child about what it was like to help normalize the experience. Let them know they are doing their part to help protect themselves, their family and other people.
- **Listen to and be honest with your child.** It's okay to acknowledge that the injection might hurt. However, try to put that feeling into context. (For example, it might feel like a pinch or poke.) Above all, listen to your child's needs and try to address them so they feel heard and know what to expect.
- **Ask about pain management relief.** Look for information about the vaccine clinic you are going to, including what comfort measures will be available and what they recommend families bring. You may want to purchase a topical numbing cream, spray or patch at your local pharmacy, which you can apply to your child in advance.

On the day of your child's vaccine appointment:

- **Dress your child in comfortable clothing** that allows for easy access to their upper arm. For example, a T-shirt underneath a soft sweater.
- **Bring a comfort item or positive distraction**, such as a stuffed animal, blanket, toy or tablet, which your child can hold or play with while they are being vaccinated.
- **Consider applying pain management relief**, such as a topical numbing cream, spray or patch. Read the directions carefully as some of these products need to be applied in advance. You can also bring Advil or Tylenol, which help with common temporary side effects like headache and sore arm.
- **Consider a comfort position** like holding your child in your lap. This helps your child feel as safe and comfortable as possible while they are being vaccinated.