



YOUTH VACCINATION AGAINST COVID19

Questions and Answers for parents/guardians of youth aged 12-17yo

MEV v1 20-05-2021

What vaccine is offered to youth 12-17yo to protect them against COVID-19?

The vaccine approved in Canada to immunize youth is the Pfizer mRNA vaccine. It is similar to the Moderna vaccine offered to adults over 18yo across Nunavik. Both of these vaccines rely on the same mRNA method and the Pfizer vaccine also relies on 2 doses to fully protect against COVID-19.

How does this vaccine train children's immune systems to fight off COVID disease?

mRNA vaccines have a strand of genetic material that is enclosed in a protective bubble of fats – this message tells the body how to build the same protein spike that the coronavirus wears on its' surface. When our bodies see this protein, they recognize it as an intruder and put up a fight to get rid of it. This is what builds your immunity against the coronavirus: the body has learned how to recognize and get rid of any intruder it meets wearing the protein spike.

Do the COVID-19 vaccines for youth 12-17yo contain a live virus? Is it possible for my child to catch COVID from the vaccine?

No. None of the vaccines approved in Canada against COVID contain live viruses. All of the vaccines deliver a strand of genetic material to people's bodies – this instructs our cells on how to make one single protein of the virus (the protein spike). None of the other proteins of the virus are made – so it's impossible for people who are vaccinated to build the entire coronavirus or to spread it to other people.

Keep in mind that it takes at least 2 weeks after the 1st dose of vaccine for the body to build protection, so it's still possible to catch the virus and become sick from it within a few days of being vaccinated.



What are the ingredients in the Pfizer mRNA vaccine for youth 12-17yo?

In addition to the mRNA strand enclosed in a protective bubble of fats, the rest of the vaccine is made of salts, sugar and water. The bubble-coated mRNA float in this solution so they don't stick to each other or to the sides of the vaccine vial and are able to be delivered to the body's cells, where they need to go.

A detailed list of ingredients can be found here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/drugs-vaccines-treatments/vaccines/pfizer-biontech.html#a1.1>

Is the dosage of Pfizer mRNA vaccine given to kids the same amount given to adults?

Yes, the dosage is the same for youth 12-17yo as for adults. Most vaccines use the same dosage across ages.

Unlike medications where taller or heavier people may need a larger dose to get an adequate level of it in their blood, kids' and adults' immune systems alike, usually only need very small amounts of a vaccine to react and build up solid defense systems.

If my child gets a COVID-19 vaccine, can it affect the results of their COVID-19 test?

No. Getting any vaccine, including the ones against COVID, will not influence the result of COVID-19 testing.

If my child vaccinates against COVID, can they still catch the coronavirus?

They can, but will not be severely sick from it. That is the point of the vaccine: making sure children stay healthy.

What the vaccine does, is protect people from becoming sick from the coronavirus if they catch it. The vaccine prevents COVID Disease and complications associated with it. One dose protects children well after 14 days and 2 doses makes sure they stay safe from becoming sick in the long term.

What the vaccine can also do is prevent youth from becoming infected with the virus and prevent transmission to others.



What side effects can be expected after getting the COVID-19 vaccine?

The most common side effects with mRNA vaccines in youth are pain at the injection site, fatigue, headache, and muscle aches usually lasting 1-2 days at most. It's alright if youth take anti-inflammatories (ibuprofen) or antipyretics (acetaminophen) after vaccination if they experience some of these side-effects.

What if my child doesn't have side effects, does that mean the vaccine didn't work?

Many people get the vaccine and do not experience side effects. This does not mean that the vaccine did not work.

Does my child need to get both doses of the vaccine in the same arm for the vaccine to work?

No, it is fine for your child to get their 2nd dose in the other arm if they choose. People often choose to get their shot in the arm they use least, just in case that arm becomes sore for 1 or 2 days. They can get their second dose in whichever arm they want. The second dose will make sure the body's immunity remembers how to fight against the coronavirus in the long term.

People who become very sick from COVID are usually older adults, so why should my child vaccinate?

First - while it is true that most cases of severe COVID-19 happen in older adults, younger healthy children can also become seriously ill and suffer from long term health complications. Conditions such as obesity or asthma can increase the risk for hospitalization. Two to six weeks after being infected, children can also be prone to a unique complication of COVID: multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C). This can affect heart function and require intensive care. In the USA, more than 125 adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 have died from COVID-19 – putting COVID-19 as one of the top causes of death in this age group. The risks of COVID in children are not absent and justify vaccinating as a prevention.

Second - Youth need to interact with adults of different generations without the fear of passing on a dangerous virus to them. Vaccinating children can help them reconnect with family members who may be at risk of severe COVID disease.



How can I be sure that the vaccine will not affect my child's growth & development?

Puberty is a period of intense growth and development involving many changes to the mind and body. There is no evidence that mRNA vaccines interfere in any of this. The mRNA vaccine does not affect hormone levels. The mRNA vaccines stimulate an immune response that will protect your child against the coronavirus.

Could the COVID-19 vaccine affect my child's fertility in the future?

There is no evidence to support this myth. There is no biological reason to expect that reproductive function could be affected by mRNA vaccines now or in years to follow.

Can my child get her COVID-19 vaccine during her period?

Yes. Women of all ages do not need to schedule their COVID-19 vaccine around their menstrual cycle.

What if my teen smokes cannabis or drinks alcohol, could that make the vaccine dangerous or not work for them?

Using these substances does not make the vaccine unsafe.

There are no studies surrounding frequent or casual cannabis or alcohol use and how this could impact the vaccine's effectiveness. However, regular smoking of cannabis can weaken people's immunity and respiratory systems, so for people who regularly smoke cannabis, it's even more important to get a COVID-19 vaccine to protect against the virus.