

## Vaccination against COVID-19

### Children Aged 5 to 11 years

The children's mRNA vaccine against COVID-19 (Pfizer) is offered to children aged 5 to 11 years.

#### COVID-19

##### **What is COVID-19?**

COVID-19 is an infection caused by a virus of the coronavirus family. There are several types of coronavirus. Most cause mild symptoms and sometimes none at all. Others can cause more severe symptoms. This is the case with COVID-19, caused by the coronavirus called SRAS-CoV-2.

##### **What are the symptoms of COVID-19?**

In children, the primary symptoms can be mistaken for those of the common cold. The most frequent are fever, cough, nausea and vomiting, stomach aches and diarrhea. Other symptoms can also appear: sore throat, headache, muscle pain, intense fatigue, major loss of appetite, sudden loss of the sense of smell without nasal congestion and breathing difficulties.

##### **How does COVID-19 spread?**

COVID-19 spreads from person to person through contact with droplets projected into the air when an infected person breathes, talks, coughs or sneezes. A person without symptoms can transmit COVID-19 without knowing it. Transmission through contaminated surfaces or objects is also possible.

##### **What are the possible complications of COVID-19?**

Although rare, the possible complications of COVID-19 in children are:

- symptoms that persist for several months (long COVID-19): breathing difficulties, fatigue, weakness, difficulties with sleep and concentration;
- pneumonia and other respiratory problems;
- heart problems;
- neurological problems (inflammation of the brain);
- inflammation of several organs (MIS-C) which negatively affects their function. MIS-C can occur some weeks after infection with COVID-19, even if the infection was mild or did not cause any symptoms.

### **How can you protect against COVID-19?**

Vaccination is the best means of protection against COVID-19, along with other measures such as physical distancing, use of a mask or face covering and handwashing.

## **Vaccination**

### **Why vaccinate children aged 5 to 11 years?**

The reason for vaccinating children aged 5 to 11 years against COVID-19 is to protect them from the disease and its complications, even though they are rare.

As vaccination hinders circulation of the virus, it can also contribute to maintaining school, sports and social activities so children can return to normal living as soon as possible. Vaccination also helps prevent contaminating other more vulnerable persons and the community.

### **Which vaccine is used?**

The children's mRNA vaccine against COVID-19 from Pfizer is used for children aged 5 to 11 years. It is the same vaccine used for persons aged 12 years and older but with three times less messenger RNA.

### **How many doses of the vaccine are required?**

Two doses of the children's mRNA vaccine against COVID-19 from Pfizer are necessary. They are administered through intramuscular injection.

Children who have already had COVID-19 only need one dose of the vaccine. However, they can receive a second dose if desired. For those with a weakened immune system, two doses are necessary, even if they have already had COVID-19. The vaccinator can determine the number of doses required for each child.

### **Is the children's mRNA vaccine against COVID-19 from Pfizer effective?**

Yes. This children's vaccine against COVID-19 has an effectiveness rate of more than 90% after two doses.

### **Is the children's mRNA vaccine against COVID-19 from Pfizer safe?**

Yes. Pfizer's vaccine for children is approved by Health Canada. It went through all the necessary steps before approval. It has been subjected to quality testing involving a large number of children. Experts are closely monitoring any undesirable effects that could arise after vaccination and are taking the required measures to ensure the vaccine is used safely.

### **With vaccination, how long does protection against COVID-19 last?**

Studies to better identify the duration of protection are ongoing. Protection lasts at least six months.

### **What are the possible reactions to the vaccine?**

There are fewer reactions among children than among adolescents and adults.

The majority of children will feel pain at the injection site.

Fewer than one out of two children might experience:

- redness or swelling at the injection site;
- headache;
- fatigue;
- muscle pain.

Fewer than 1 in 10 children might experience chills, fever.

Most of these reactions last from one to two days. They are more frequent after the second dose.

More rarely, swelling of the lymph nodes in the armpit can occur (fewer than 1 in 100 children).

Rare cases of myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) or pericarditis (inflammation of the lining of the heart) have been observed in older children and adults. No cases have been observed in children aged 5 to 11 years in clinical studies, but a very low risk cannot be completely ruled out.

It is recommended to remain at the site for at least 15 minutes after vaccination, as allergic reactions to the vaccine, although rare, are possible. This type of reaction generally occurs some minutes after vaccination. The personnel on site are trained to intervene immediately to treat the allergic reaction.

### **Can the vaccine cause COVID-19?**

This vaccine cannot cause COVID-19, as it does not contain the virus responsible for the disease. On the other hand, a person who was in contact with the virus days before or after vaccination could still develop COVID-19. It is important to continue following the [health directives](#).

### **What should I do in case of a reaction to the vaccine?**

Apply a cold, damp compress to the injection site to reduce pain, swelling, redness or itching. To reduce fever or discomfort, take acetaminophen (for example, Tylenol) or ibuprofen (for example, Advil).

Consult a health professional in case of chest pain, palpitations or shortness of breath.

Do not hesitate to contact your CLSC or call the emergency line, depending on the severity of the symptoms.

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