

# Vaccination against COVID-19 for children age 12 to 17

Pfizer's messenger RNA (mRNA) COVID-19 vaccine (30ug dosage) is recommended for children age 12 and over.

## COVID-19

### What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an infection caused by a virus in the coronavirus family. There are several types of coronavirus. Most cause mild symptoms, but others can cause more severe symptoms, like COVID-19, which is caused by the coronavirus known as SARS-CoV-2.

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

In children, the main symptoms can be similar to those of the common cold. Most common symptoms are fever, cough, nausea and vomiting, stomach ache, and diarrhea. Other symptoms can also appear like sore throat, headache, muscle aches, severe fatigue, severe loss of appetite, sudden loss of smell without nasal congestion, and difficulty breathing.

### How is COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 is spread from person to person through contact with droplets released into the air when an infected person talks, coughs, or sneezes. An asymptomatic person can spread COVID-19 without realizing it. It can also be spread via contaminated surfaces and objects, although that's not the main mode of transmission.

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

Possible complications of COVID-19 include:

- Pneumonia and other respiratory issues
- Heart problems
- Neurological problems
- Death

In addition to these complications, some people also experience COVID-19 symptoms such as loss of smell or fatigue lasting several months.

### What's the best way to protect against COVID-19?

Vaccination is the best protection against COVID-19, especially when combined with other measures such as social distancing, wearing a mask or face covering, and hand washing.

## Vaccination

### Why vaccinate 12- to 17-year-olds?

The aim of vaccinating children age 12 to 17 is to protect them against COVID-19 and its complications.

**Which vaccine will be offered?**

Pfizer's mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (dosage 30ug) will be offered to children age 12 to 17.

**How many doses of vaccine are needed?**

Two doses of Pfizer's mRNA COVID-19 vaccine are required, given via intramuscular injection. For children who are immunocompromised, 3 doses are needed.

Some children who have already had COVID-19 may only need one dose of the vaccine. The vaccinator will determine how many doses are needed for each children.

**Is a booster shot needed?**

A booster shot is now recommended for young people 12 to 17 years of age presenting with a greater risk of complications if they become infected by COVID-19. These young people are those living with pre-existing health conditions such as:

- Chronic heart problems that are severe enough to necessitate regular medical follow ups or medical care;
- Chronic lung problems that are severe enough to necessitate regular medical follow ups or medical care (e.g. asthma);
- Chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, obesity, immunity system problems, kidney problems, liver problems, cancer ...
- Medical conditions leading to a decreased evacuation of respiratory secretions (e.g. cognitive impairment, spinal cord injury, seizure disorder, neuromuscular disorders...);

A booster shot is also recommended to people aged 12-17 years old living in closed collective environment such as group homes, because of higher risks of transmission.

The booster shot is offered to everyone aged 12 and over.

**Is the Pfizer mRNA COVID-19 vaccine effective?**

Yes. The vaccine is very effective in preventing COVID-19 complications. The booster shot enhances the protection against COVID-19 and its variants.

**Is the Pfizer mRNA COVID-19 vaccine safe?**

Yes. The Pfizer vaccine is approved by Health Canada. It was put through all the steps of the vaccine approval process. High quality studies were also performed on a large sample of people. Experts are closely monitoring any adverse reactions that could occur following vaccination and are taking steps to ensure that the vaccine is used safely.

**How long does protection against COVID-19 last after vaccination?**

Studies to better determine how long protection lasts are still ongoing. However, data show that the protection against COVID-19 lowers several months after the last dose of vaccine.

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

The majority of children will experience:

- Pain at the injection site (90%),
- Headache (76%),
- Fatigue (78%).

Many children may also feel:

- Chills (49%),
- Fever (24%),
- Muscle aches (42%),
- Joint pain (20%).

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

Often, redness or swelling at the injection site is observed (9%).

Rarely, nausea or swelling of the armpit lymph nodes may occur (less than 1%).

In a minority of young people, reactions to the vaccine may prevent them from carrying out daily activities for one or two days, most commonly after the second dose.

About 1 in 50,000 people may have a severe allergic reaction after receiving the mRNA COVID-19 vaccine. The frequency of this reaction is higher than what is usually expected after a vaccine, but still very rare. This type of allergic reaction usually occurs within minutes. Staff onsite are trained on how to stop it right away.

Some rare cases (about 1 in 10,000 people) of myocarditis or pericarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle or its envelope) have been observed in the days following the administration of the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose of Pfizer COVID-19 mRNA vaccine. This reaction is more frequent in young men. Most people who have developed a myocarditis or pericarditis following an mRNA vaccine seem to have completely recovered.

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

The vaccine can't cause COVID-19 because it doesn't contain the virus that causes the disease. However, if someone comes into contact with the virus in the days preceding or following their vaccination, they could still develop COVID-19.

### **What should I do if they have a reaction to the vaccine?**

Apply a cold wet compress to the injection site to reduce pain, swelling, redness, or itching. To reduce fever or discomfort, administer acetaminophen (like Tylenol) or ibuprofen (like Advil). If experiencing symptoms such as shortness of breath, chest pain and palpitations, consult your nurse at your local CLSC.