

The COVID-19 vaccine

For children
aged 6 months
to 4 years at
higher risk
of COVID-19



Please read this leaflet before your child's vaccine appointment

This leaflet is to help you make an informed decision about getting your child vaccinated against COVID-19.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory infection caused by a coronavirus, known as SARS-CoV-2. It's highly infectious and spreads through the air when people cough or sneeze, or when people touch surfaces where it has landed, then touch their eyes, nose or mouth.

Although most children who get COVID-19 have a mild illness, some children can become very unwell. Children with certain conditions are at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19, which may lead to them being very poorly and having to go to hospital.

Find out more about COVID-19 at www.nhsinform.scot/covid19

Who is being offered the COVID-19 vaccine?

NHSScotland is offering a COVID-19 vaccine to children aged 6 months to 4 years who are at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19. To be invited for vaccination this winter, your child must have turned 6 months old by 1 September 2023.

For more information, including eligible conditions, visit www.nhsinform.scot/wintervaccines

Why is my child being offered the COVID-19 vaccine?

The vaccine helps to build up immunity to COVID-19, so the body can fight it off more easily.

If your child is vaccinated, they are much less likely to get seriously ill from COVID-19 or need to go to hospital.

Getting the vaccine will help to protect your child against COVID-19.



Infants and young children with underlying health conditions are seven times more likely to be admitted to paediatric intensive care units with severe COVID-19 compared to those without underlying health conditions.

Why is my child being offered the COVID-19 vaccine?

Some children are at higher risk from COVID-19, including those living with certain conditions such as:

- a neurodisability or neuromuscular condition such as cerebral palsy
- severe or profound learning disability
- Down's syndrome
- serious genetic conditions
- serious heart conditions
- lowered immunity due to disease or treatment
- endocrine disorders
- asplenia or dysfunction of the spleen.

Is the vaccine safe?

NHSScotland will only use a vaccine if it meets the required standards of safety and effectiveness. All medicines, including vaccines, are tested for safety and effectiveness before they're allowed to be used.



The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) assesses all the data and also ensures a vaccine works and that all the necessary trials and checks have been completed.

How does the vaccine work?

The vaccine helps to build up immunity to COVID-19, so the body can fight it off more easily. The vaccine cannot give you COVID-19. If your child comes into contact with the infection, the antibodies recognise it and help protect them.

My child has already had COVID-19, can they get the vaccine?

Even if your child has already had COVID-19, they could still get it again. If your child is vaccinated, and they get COVID-19 again, the vaccine will reduce the risk of your child getting seriously ill with COVID-19 and having to go to hospital.

My child has already had a COVID-19 vaccine – do they need another one?

NHSScotland is offering a COVID-19 vaccine to children at higher risk to help protect them this winter. It's important to keep up to date with the COVID-19 vaccines your child is offered. We recommend coming forward every time your child is invited to keep their protection topped up.

Are there any reasons my child should not get the vaccine?

The vaccine should not be given to children who have had a confirmed severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to any of the ingredients in the vaccine or a previous dose of the same vaccine. It's important that you tell the person giving your child the vaccine if they've ever had a serious allergic reaction.

The vaccine is not a live vaccine and does not contain any animal products or egg.

For more information on vaccine ingredients, and links to the manufacturer's patient information leaflets, visit or call:



**[www.nhsinform.scot/
covid19vaccineleaflets](http://www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccineleaflets)**



0800 030 8013

Will my child be offered the flu vaccine?

Every winter, the flu vaccine is offered to all children aged 2 to 5 years and not yet at school (children must be aged 2 years or above on 1 September 2023 to be eligible). Children aged 6 months to 2 years at higher risk from flu are also offered the flu vaccine.

For more information about the flu vaccine for children visit **www.nhsinform.scot/childflu**

Preparing your child for vaccination



On the day of the vaccine

- ✓ Make sure your child wears practical clothing that's easy to get off and on.
- ✓ It might be useful to take your child's favourite toy or blanket with you.
- ✓ If you feel anxious yourself, or if you have a fear of needles, try to stay calm and show your child there's nothing to fear.
- ✓ Let the person giving the vaccine know if you or your child feel nervous. They'll be very understanding and can provide support.



It's important to let the vaccinator know if your child is receiving any medicines, treatment or therapy at a hospital or specialist clinic. If you have questions about the timing of your child's vaccine, speak to their health professional or specialist.

On the day of your child's appointment

At the appointment, the vaccinator will check parent/carer consent. They'll give you information and explain anything that you're unsure about or do not understand.

The COVID-19 vaccine is given as an injection in the upper arm or thigh. The needles used are small and your child should only feel a tiny pinprick.

Can my child get other vaccines on the same day as their COVID-19 vaccine?

Children can safely get other vaccines on the same day they get their COVID-19 vaccine. Routine immunisations give your child the best possible protection from serious diseases and should not be delayed.

What if my child is ill on the day?

Your child can still have the COVID-19 vaccine if they have a minor illness as long as they do not have a fever. If your child feels very unwell, their COVID-19 vaccine appointment may be postponed until they have fully recovered. You should not attend an appointment if you or your child have a fever or think you might be infectious to others.



If your child is unable to leave your home, or if they need additional support at their appointment, call your local Health Board to discuss your requirements.

Common side effects

It's normal for your child to experience side effects after a vaccine. It shows the vaccine is teaching their body's immune system how to protect itself from COVID-19. Side effects are usually mild, only last a day or two and should not last longer than a week.

Your child might:



get a little redness, swelling or tenderness where the injection was given. This tends to be worst around 1 to 2 days after the vaccine



appear to feel more tired



have general aches or mild flu-like symptoms



have a fever or be a bit irritable

If your child's side effects seem to get worse, or if you're concerned, call **NHS 24** free on **111** and tell them about your child's vaccination so they can assess your child properly.

Rare side effects

An uncommon side effect is swollen glands in the armpit or neck on the same side as the arm where your child had the vaccine. This can last for around 10 days, but if it lasts longer see your doctor.

Cases of inflammation of the heart (called myocarditis or pericarditis) have been reported rarely after the COVID-19 vaccines. Among children, the risk of myocarditis following vaccination decreases with decreasing age.



You should seek medical advice urgently if your child experiences any of the following side effects after vaccination:

- symptoms of a severe allergic reaction, such as difficulty breathing, wheezing, or reduced level of consciousness
- shortness of breath or chest pain
- feelings of having a fast-beating, fluttering or pounding heart.

Fever after the COVID-19 vaccine

It's quite common to develop a fever (temperature above 37.8°C) after a vaccination, but developing a fever is more common after the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. The fever is a normal response to the vaccine.

Fevers are usually mild, so you only need to give a dose of infant paracetamol if your child is not comfortable or is unwell. Read the instructions on the product packaging and patient information leaflet very carefully and never give medicines that contain aspirin to children under 16 years of age.

If your child's fever starts more than 48 hours after the vaccine, lasts longer than 48 hours, or is above 39°C, your child may have another infection and you should seek medical advice. Call your GP or **NHS 24** on **111**.

Reporting side effects

Millions of people have had a COVID-19 vaccine and the safety of the vaccines continues to be carefully monitored. You can report suspected side effects of vaccines and medicines through the Yellow Card Scheme at **www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard**, by using the Yellow Card app, or by calling **0800 731 6789**.

For more information about the COVID-19 vaccine, visit **www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine** or call **0800 030 8013**.



Translations



Easy read



BSL



Audio



Large print



Braille

For more information, including other formats and translation support:



www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccineleaflets



0800 030 8013



phs.otherformats@phs.scot

Information correct at time of publication. Please visit **www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine** for the latest information.

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www.nhsinform.scot/data-protection
www.informationgovernance.scot.nhs.uk/use-of-your-immunisation-data/

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