



Durham Region Health Department **Facts about...**



COVID-19 Vaccines for Children Ages 5-11

[COVID-19](#) is a viral infection that primarily affects the lungs. Although children ages 5 to 11 are less likely to get very sick from COVID-19, children with certain underlying medical conditions may have a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. In rare instances, children can develop a serious complication called multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C).

On November 19, 2021, Health Canada authorized a pediatric version of the Pfizer vaccine (**Pediatric Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty®**) for use in children ages 5 (born in 2016) to 11.

How COVID-19 Vaccines Work?

mRNA vaccines work by telling the cells in your body to make a “spike protein” that is found on the surface of the virus that causes COVID-19. The “spike protein” from mRNA does not make you sick but will trigger your body to make antibodies. Antibodies will protect you from getting sick if you are exposed to the virus.

How effective is the vaccine?

In studies including children ages 5 – 11, the Pediatric Pfizer vaccine was estimated to be 90.7% effective at preventing symptomatic illness from COVID-19 seven days after the second dose. It will take about two weeks after completing the COVID-19 vaccine series (i.e., two doses) to develop maximum protection against COVID-19.

Is the vaccine safe?

All COVID-19 vaccines available in Canada:

- Were tested in clinical trials to ensure they meet safety standards.
- Have been licensed and approved by Health Canada.
- Are monitored closely for any significant reactions and steps are taken to ensure safety standards continue to be met.

Health Canada has determined that the Pediatric Pfizer vaccine is safe and effective at providing a strong immune response against COVID-19.

905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | durham.ca/health

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



Who should get the vaccine?

Children turning 5 years of age in 2021 (born in 2016) to 11 years old without any contraindications are eligible for publicly funded Pediatric Pfizer vaccine. An OHIP card is **not** required to receive this vaccine.

Vaccine benefits

Vaccinating children will provide them with strong protection against COVID-19 and the highly contagious Delta variant. The vaccine will decrease serious illness and long-term effects from COVID-19, help keep schools open, and reduce the rare but serious complication called multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C). Since children can be infected and not have any symptoms, vaccination will help protect other family members too, such as those who are too young to receive the vaccine yet or vulnerable older individuals.

Is the vaccine for children 5 to 11 years different than for 12 years and over?

The Pediatric Pfizer vaccine is a lower dose (10 mcg) that is one third of the Pfizer vaccine available for individuals 12 years and older. Also, the addition of Tromethamine (Tris or trometamol) makes the pediatric version a new product when compared to the Pfizer vaccine used for adolescents and adults. Specifically, Tromethamine is a buffer (in vaccines and medications, including those for use in children) used to increase vaccine storage and stability.

What is the schedule for the vaccine?

Similar to the adolescent/adult version, this vaccine is a two-dose series. The vaccine doses are given eight weeks apart.

Side effects and risks

The Pediatric Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, like medicines and other vaccines, may cause side effects. In clinical trials, most of the side effects experienced by children 5-11 were mild to moderate, and usually resolved within a few days.

Very common side effects (i.e., may affect more than 1 in 10 people):

- Pain, swelling and redness at injection site
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle pain

Common (i.e., may affect 1 to less than 10 in 100 people):

- Chills
- Fever
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Joint pain



Precautions

Delay vaccination if your child:

- Has a fever; or
- Is sick with COVID-19 symptoms; or
- Was diagnosed with myocarditis or pericarditis following mRNA vaccination or has had myocarditis before; or
- Has a previous history of Multi-inflammatory syndrome unrelated to any previous COVID-19 vaccination.

Talk to your child's health care provider first if your child:

- Has any allergies or had an allergic reaction to a previous COVID-19 vaccine dose or another vaccine or medical product.
- Is immunosuppressed due to disease or treatment.

Your child should NOT get this vaccine if they:

- Have allergies or hypersensitivity to any vaccine ingredients, including:
 - polyethylene glycol or Polysorbate 80 or tromethamine (trometamol or Tris)
- Have had a severe reaction to a previous dose of this vaccine.

Can other vaccines be given at the same time?

If possible, children should not receive the Pediatric Pfizer vaccine 14 days before or after other vaccines. This is a precaution to monitor any side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine or another vaccine. In some cases, your child's health care provider may recommend a vaccine that is needed urgently. Talk to your child's health care provider if this is the case.

How to prepare your child for the vaccine:

Work with your child to answer the questions on the [CARD tool](#) asking them how they would like to prepare for the vaccination. As well, practice attending a community immunization clinic with your child by reviewing our [COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic Roadmap](#).

Talk to your child about the COVID-19 vaccine

- Be honest and direct
- Share information and answer their questions using age-appropriate language
- Let them know that getting the vaccine will help them stay healthy and get back to seeing their friends, families and staying in school.

Before the vaccination, let your child know:

- What to expect
- Why the vaccine is important
- That the needle might feel like a pinch in the upper arm that only lasts a few seconds.
- That the nurse will help to decrease their fear/pain (e.g.: distraction, deep breathing, relaxing their arm, talking them through the experience, etc.).

On the day of the vaccination, have your child:



- Eat something before their appointment
- Wear a shirt with loose sleeves
- Wear a mask to access the clinic
- Follow instructions provided by the public health nurse and your reminder email to access the clinic.

Informed Consent for your child to receive the vaccine

In Ontario there is no minimum age to consent to treatment. Rather, Ontario uses a capacity-based consent model. A person is capable of consenting to treatment if they can understand the information that is relevant to making the decision and are able to appreciate the consequences of the decision. However, younger children may not have the ability to provide informed consent for themselves and will may require parental consent before receiving the vaccine. Consent will also be required for the collection, use and disclosure of personal health information.

Proof of vaccination

Ontario has an enhanced vaccine certificate with a unique QR code that is safe, secure, and convenient. QR codes are available for 5 – 11 year old children, with a green photo health card, via [covid19.ontariohealth.ca](https://www.covid19.ontariohealth.ca). However, in Ontario, children ages 5 to 11 are not required to show proof of immunization. Different jurisdictions may have other requirements.

After you get the vaccine

There is a small chance you may still get COVID-19 after being vaccinated and spread the virus to others. Therefore, you will need to continue to practice recommended public health measures, such as:

- Continue to wear a face covering and practice social distancing
- Wash your hands often with warm water and soap or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Avoid enclosed, poorly ventilated spaces and crowded places
- Stay home when you are sick
- If you develop symptoms or are a close contact of a person with COVID-19 14 days after your second dose refer to [Facts about ... COVID-19 Close Contact](#)

Where to get more information

For more information talk to your child's health care provider or visit durham.ca/covidvaccines.

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