



Durham Region Health Department
Facts about...



COVID-19 Vaccines for Children Ages 6 months to under 5 years

[COVID-19](#) is a viral infection that primarily affects the lungs. Although children ages 6 months to 5 years 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 July 14, 2022, Health Canada authorized **Moderna Spikevax®** (25 mcg) COVID-19 vaccine for use in children ages 6 months to under 5 years of age. The dose for this age group (25 mcg) is half the dosage of Moderna Spikevax (50 mcg) COVID-19 vaccine offered to children 6 to 11 years of age. This is the first COVID-19 vaccine that has been authorized for use in children under the age of 5 in Canada.

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 6 months to 5 years of age, the **Moderna Spikevax®** (25 mcg) vaccine was estimated to be 50.6% effective in children 6 to 23 months of age and 36.8% effective in children 2 to 5 years of age at preventing symptomatic illness from COVID-19 14 days after the second dose.

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.

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



Health Canada has determined that the vaccines are safe and very effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19.

Who should get the vaccine?

Children 6 months (must be 6 months of age at time of immunization) to under 5 years of age without any contraindications are eligible for publicly funded paediatric Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. An OHIP card is **not** required to receive this vaccine.

Children who have received **Moderna Spikevax®** (25 mcg) for a previous dose and turn 6 prior to completing their primary series are recommended to receive **Moderna Spikevax®** (50 mcg) to complete their primary series. If the primary series was completed with **Moderna Spikevax®** (25 mcg) or with Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty (10 mcg), the dose should be considered valid and the series complete.

Vaccine benefits

Vaccinating children will provide them with strong protection against COVID-19 and the highly contagious Omicron 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.

Are the vaccines for children under 5 different than for 5 years and over?

The **Moderna Spikevax®** (25 mcg) vaccine (for children ages 6 months to under 5 years) is half of the dose used for children ages 6-11 (50 mcg) as younger children need a lower dose of the vaccine to get the same protection from COVID-19.

The use of Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty (10 mcg) is preferred to **Moderna Spikevax®** in children 5 years and older.

What is the schedule for the vaccine?

The **Moderna Spikevax®** (25 mcg) vaccine is a two-dose series. The recommended interval between the two doses is 56 days as this time period provides a stronger immune response and may reduce the risk of myocarditis or pericarditis. Children can receive their second dose less than 56 days after the first dose with informed consent. If so, the minimum interval is at least 28 days for Moderna. A primary series of three doses of **Moderna Spikevax®** (25 mcg) COVID-19 vaccine may be offered to children 6 months to 5 years of age who are moderately to severely immunocompromised, with an interval of 4 to 8 weeks between each dose.

Children aged 6 months to under 5 years who receive paediatric Moderna Spikevax for their first dose are recommended to receive paediatric Moderna Spikevax for their second dose.

Side effects and risks

The **Moderna Spikevax®** (25 mcg) COVID-19 vaccine, like medicines and other vaccines, may cause side effects. In clinical trials, most of the side effects experienced by children 6 months to 5 years were mild to moderate, and usually resolved within a few days.

Most frequently reported reactions to the vaccine in the clinical trial included:

- Pain
- Sleepiness
- Loss of appetite
- Fatigue

The risk of myocarditis and/or pericarditis with the Moderna Spikevax in children 6 months to 11 years of age is unknown.

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 multisystem 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 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?

At this time, NACI strongly recommends that other vaccines (live or non-live) should not be given on the same day as the **Moderna Spikevax®** (25 mcg) primary series. If possible, children should not receive a COVID-19 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 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 can consent 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 may require parental consent before receiving the vaccine. Consent will also be required for the collection, use and disclosure of personal health information.

Should my child get the vaccine if they already had COVID-19?

Yes, children who have had a COVID-19 infection are encouraged to get the vaccine if they are eligible. For children who have already had COVID-19, NACI suggests waiting 8 weeks after the start of COVID-19 symptoms or a positive COVID-19 test before beginning or continuing the primary series. This interval may be shortened to 4 weeks for children who are moderately to severely immunocompromised. More information, including about how long to wait and the definition of COVID-19 infection, is available on the [Durham Region vaccine website](#).

After you get the vaccine

There is a 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](#).

If your child develops symptoms or is a close contact of a person with COVID-19, refer to [COVID-19 Case and Contact Information Hub](#)

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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