

Paediatric COVID-19 Vaccine: 6 Months to Under 5 years

FAQ for Parents/Guardians as of October 17, 2022

Are children under five years old at risk from COVID-19 infection?

- Yes, children under five years old are at risk from COVID-19 infection
- Even though children don't tend to get as sick as adults (especially older adults) very young children from newborns to four years old are at higher risk of severity compared to slightly older or school aged children
- More children are being hospitalized with COVID-19 during Omicron than during previous waves
- We know that some children can develop a rare multi-inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C) or even long-COVID, but we can't predict who will get sickest
- It's important to complete the primary vaccine series (two or three doses) for the best possible protection against COVID-19

Why vaccinate young children?

- COVID-19 variants are continuing to cause illness and circulate widely in the community
- COVID-19 transmission is expected to increase again this fall and may even be worse as people move indoors with the colder weather
- Flu (or influenza) season is also expected to cause illness, so we want to protect children from COVID-19 and avoid severe infections with multiple viruses together (such as influenza and COVID-19)
- While uncommon, children can become seriously ill from COVID-19 and hospitalized
- Vaccination allows us to protect our families and reduce the chance of family members passing COVID-19 to vulnerable people who may become severely ill, or be forced to miss work

Does the vaccine work?

- Yes! mRNA COVID-19 vaccines are effective at preventing your child from getting COVID-19 (including when Omicron is the main variant)
- Both Moderna's and Pfizer's paediatric COVID-19 vaccine are effective in preventing COVID-19 infection in children
- The vaccines are even better at preventing **severe illness or hospitalization**

What is the difference between Moderna and Pfizer paediatric COVID-19 vaccines?

- Moderna's paediatric vaccine includes two doses given eight weeks apart
- Pfizer's paediatric vaccine includes three doses, with each dose given eight weeks apart
- For a primary series, two doses of Pfizer vaccine are recommended over Moderna for everyone between 5 and 29 years of age

Are there booster doses available for kids under 5?

- There are currently no booster doses approved for children ages six months to five years
- A monovalent booster dose is available for children ages 5 to 11 years of age, and a bivalent booster dose is available for everyone 12 years of age and older

How was the vaccine studied?

- Both Moderna and Pfizer's vaccines were studied in trials including thousands of participants in the six month to under five age range
- In both cases, the vaccines demonstrated immune responses similar to those in older age groups
- None of the patients in these studies had serious side effects
- There were no cases of myocarditis or pericarditis in the clinical trials for youngest age group

What about side effects after the vaccine?

- The most common side effects include:
 - Irritability/crying
 - Pain at the injection site
 - Tiredness/fatigue
 - Low appetite
 - Fever
 - Headache and muscle pain

How do we know this vaccine won't cause long-term health problems?

- mRNA vaccines have been studied for many years in other diseases and we know the technology is safe
- These paediatric vaccines have been used in Canada, the United States and around the world, and we continuously monitor for concerns
- There have been over 12 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines given around the world with no long-term side effects reported

Why does my child need to be vaccinated if they have had COVID-19 infection?

- Vaccination after COVID-19 infection is important for the development of longer-lasting and more robust immunity
- Vaccination is the strongest protection from re-infection
- Hybrid immunity happens when you have a COVID-19 infection and then you get vaccinated; hybrid immunity is stronger and longer lasting than immunity from having been infected!
- Please wait eight weeks after infection to get vaccinated, this will allow the vaccine to provide the strongest protection

Other questions?

Visit the COVID-19 Vaccine Consult Service to book a phone appointment with a SickKids Registered Nurse: sickkids.ca/vaccineconsult

Visit york.ca/COVID19Vaccine regularly for updated information.