

## Covid-19 vaccination: 12 to 15 year olds

Summary of information and resources: 16 September 2021

*This document has been produced by NHS England (London) and provides a summary of information published by the national health, care and education bodies as at 16 September 2021. It is intended for use by the NHS, Local Authorities, elected representatives, schools and the public.*

This autumn, all children aged 12 to 15 years are being offered the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccination, following advice from the UK's four Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) to the Government.

Very few healthy children and young people with Covid-19 go on to have severe disease, but offering vaccination to 12 to 15 year olds should help to reduce the risk of complications, reduce time out of education, and reduce the spread of Covid-19 within schools.

Children will be offered the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, which is the vaccine approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) for children and young people over 12 years of age. This follows a thorough review of the safety, quality and effectiveness of the vaccine in this age group.

The NHS is now preparing to deliver a vaccination programme in schools, similar to the way that other school-aged vaccinations such as HPV and flu are managed. Most areas will start to send invitations for Covid-19 vaccination from 20 September 2021 and school vaccination teams will start vaccinating soon after that. Consent will be sought from parents, guardians and carers before vaccination starts. Alternative arrangements will be made for children who are home schooled, in secure services or specialist mental health settings.

At present, one dose of the vaccine will be offered to most children in this age group, and the timing of a second dose will be confirmed later. Children in this age group who are clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV), or live with someone who is immunosuppressed, will be offered two doses and will be contacted by their GP to arrange this.

## Links to information for healthcare workers, schools, parents, carers and young people

### [COVID-19 vaccination information on NHS.UK](#)

- General information for the public on the Covid-19 vaccination, including how to get the vaccination, eligibility, side effects and safety.

### [Children's Covid-19 vaccination leaflets](#)

- Including the 'What to expect after your Covid-19 vaccination' leaflet for children aged 12+.

### [Easy-read children's Covid-19 vaccination leaflet](#)

- Easy-read guides providing information on Covid-19 vaccination.

### [Information and FAQs for schools, parents, guardians, carers and young people on 12-15 vaccination](#)

- Including frequently asked questions about issues such as consent and side effects.

### [Review of the safety, quality and effectiveness of the vaccine in 12 to 15 year olds](#)

- Information from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) on how the vaccine was authorised.

### [Detailed information about consent for young people, including Gillick competence](#)

- The 'Green Book' has the latest information on vaccines and vaccination procedures and issues relating to it.

### [Covid-19 public guidance](#)

- National guidance on how to reduce the spread of Covid-19.

## Resources

### [Order and download public-facing publications relating to the Covid-19 vaccination programme](#)

- Including public information leaflets and vaccination record cards.

### [Download campaigns resources to support Covid-19 vaccination](#)

- Including posters and social media materials.

## Frequently asked questions

(Taken from [guidance published on GOV.UK on 15 September 2021](#))

### When do the vaccinations need to be given?

The COVID-19 vaccinations are being given from the autumn term. Your local school vaccination service will be in touch to arrange a date.

### Which vaccine is approved for use in this age group?

Children will be offered the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, which is the vaccine approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) for children and young people over 12 years of age. This follows a thorough review of the safety, quality and effectiveness of the vaccine in this age group.

### Who will be giving the vaccine to the children?

The programme will be delivered by an NHS commissioned school vaccination team which may include nurses, healthcare support workers, administrative staff, and other associated professionals who specialise in the delivery of school age vaccinations.

The team will administer the vaccination according to nationally agreed standards. Staff are appropriately qualified, trained (including in safeguarding) and experienced in vaccinating children and young people. Staff administering the vaccine will be wearing appropriate personal protective equipment.

### How will the vaccination team identify the children to be vaccinated?

The consent forms will be collected from the school by the school vaccination team. This process may happen electronically in some areas. School vaccination teams will supply paper versions for families who cannot access the digital or email versions. The team will then have a list of all children for whom consent has been received in advance of the immunisation session.

### How does the consent process work?

All parents or those with parental responsibility are asked for consent and will usually make this decision, jointly with their children.

In secondary schools, some older children may be sufficiently mature to provide their own consent. This sometimes occurs if a parent has not returned a consent form but the child still wishes to have the vaccine on the day of the session. Every effort will be made to contact the parent to seek their verbal consent. The school has no role in this process.

This is a well-established process which is used in other school-based vaccination programmes.

## How are schools involved in the consent process?

Whilst schools may host immunisation services, they are not responsible for securing parental or child consent, for assessing Gillick competence or mediating between parents and children who may disagree about whether or not to consent.

This is the role of registered nurses in the school vaccination teams, who have extensive experience and the expertise to handle these issues and are professionally accountable for their decisions. Legal accountability for offering COVID-19 vaccines to children and young people sits with the school vaccination team and not with the school.

## Can parents refuse to have their child vaccinated?

Yes. The vaccination is not mandatory. Parents will be asked to give their consent for the vaccination. Children may express a wish to have the vaccine and may have the capacity to provide informed consent themselves.

Parents should be encouraged to speak to their children ahead of time so that there is agreement on consent by the vaccination session.

## How should schools respond to misinformation campaigns about the vaccine?

We are aware some schools have received letters or emails which feature false or misleading information (misinformation) about the safety, efficacy and purpose of the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Headteachers and teachers are advised:

1. Not to engage directly: misinformation narratives and tactics flourish when they are responded to.
2. Acknowledge receipt: if a response is needed, simply acknowledge receipt of concerns.
3. If there is a need to, refer to the latest scientific guidance on the issue. Some helpful links to trusted sources include:
  - [COVID-19 children's programme guidance and leaflets](#) from Public Health England

- [Vaccine Knowledge project](#)
- the World Health Organization's [Mythbusters page](#)
- the [Check Before You Share Toolkit](#)
- [Health Publications website](#) to order and download COVID-19 publications
- information on the [COVID-19 vaccines](#)
- information on the [COVID-19 vaccination programme](#)

## What about those children turning 12 years of age within the school year, after the date of the vaccination session?

School vaccination providers will vaccinate all children aged 12 years and over on the day of the school visit. Young people in year 7 who are aged 12 years and have consented will be identified by school vaccination teams and vaccinated at the same session, alongside pupils in years 8 onwards.

A follow-up offer will be made to any children who miss the first vaccination in their school. This will help to ensure that the following pupils can access the vaccine:

- those turning 12 years after the session
- those who were absent from school on the day
- those who have recently had a COVID-19 infection
- those who subsequently change their minds or take longer to reach a decision.

## What happens if a child has a health condition or is unwell on the day of the vaccination session?

If a child is unwell on the day, the school vaccination provider team will decide whether to proceed with vaccination or not.

For any children who want to be vaccinated but are unable for health or other reasons to have the vaccine on the day, there will be catch-up arrangements in place.

## Why do children have to be observed for 15 minutes after vaccination.

Serious allergic reactions to vaccination are very rare but tend to happen within a few minutes of the injection. Vaccination teams are all trained to spot and manage allergic reactions and so all children will be observed for 15 minutes.

All vaccination teams will bring the necessary equipment to treat an allergic reaction.

Children with allergies to common food items are not at higher risk of these serious allergies.

## What should be done if a child becomes unwell in school after receiving the vaccination?

If the school vaccination team is still on site, seek advice directly from them. If they have left the site, the situation should be managed according to existing policies for pupil sickness in school. Schools should contact the vaccination team to ensure they are aware and can report any event related to the timing of administration of the vaccine.

See [NHS.UK](https://www.nhs.uk) for further information.

## Will children who are home educated be offered a vaccine as part of this programme?

All children in the eligible age group who do not attend school, for example those who are home educated or living in secure accommodation should be offered the vaccine.

Local NHS teams will have plans in place to offer vaccination to these children.

## Can a 12 to 15 year old use the National Booking Service to make an appointment for a COVID-19 vaccination?

Booking via the National Booking Service is not presently planned for children in this age group.

## Can a healthy 12 to 15 year old use a COVID-19 walk-in vaccination site?

Unfortunately, walk-ins from this age group cannot be accepted. Presently there are no plans to make them available.

## Can school staff have the vaccine at the same time as children?

Not as part of the schools' programme. All school staff will already have been offered vaccination as part of the adult programme.

They should make sure that they have had their 2 doses of COVID-19 vaccine. If they have not yet been vaccinated, they can still make an appointment with their GP, book online, go to a walk in centre or call 119.

See [NHS.UK](https://www.nhs.uk) for further information.