**COVID-19 vaccination of healthy 12 to 15-year-olds**

On 22 September, following a recommendation from the UK’s four Chief Medical Officers, the NHS began to vaccinate healthy children aged 12 to 15 in schools against COVID-19, working with and through the school aged immunisation services (SAIS) that provide other vaccines such as flu in schools.

In addition, from Saturday 23 October, young people aged between 12 and 15 have been able to book a vaccine at a vaccination centre. Using the [NHS National Booking Service](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/)**, they can** get vaccinated at hundreds of existing vaccination centres across the country.

**Millions of letters will begin to arrive with parents and those with parental responsibilities over the coming weeks, inviting them to book their child in for a jab, either online or by calling 119.**

**External resources**

* UKHSA resources for parents, children and young people, including posters and health information: [Web Link](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-resources-for-children-and-young-people)

**Frequently asked questions**

1. **Who is now giving the COVID-19 vaccine to healthy 12 to 15-year-olds?**

Vaccination is already being carried out by school aged immunisation services (SAIS), provider organisations such as NHS community trusts who are contracted in local systems to provide routine immunisation services such as flu. Through vaccination sites available on the National Booking Service, it will be provided by trained staff at local NHS and pharmacy settings.

1. **Will this now be a child’s only chance to get the COVID-19 vaccine?**

No. The main way for children to get the vaccine remains through their local school-aged immunisation service provider, which usually operate through their local school. This includes plans to vaccinate those who are home schooled, in further education colleges, secure services or specialist mental health settings. Even if a child misses the first round of vaccinations at a local school, each provider has committed to provide the option of follow-up appointments.

1. **Should a child get an extra dose of the vaccine if they have had one already?**

Most children should only have one dose of vaccine so if they already received the vaccine in school their parents will not book an additional appointment. A relatively small proportion of children in this age group are eligible for two doses of the vaccine, either because:

* they have a condition that means they're at high risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19 (this could be a severe problem with the brain or nerves, such as cerebral palsy; Down's syndrome; severe or multiple learning disabilities or they're on the learning disability register; or a condition that means they're more likely to get infections such as some genetic conditions or types of cancer)

or

* they live with someone who is more likely to get infections (such as someone who has HIV, has had a transplant or is having certain treatments such as for cancer, lupus or rheumatoid arthritis)

Children who are eligible for two doses of the vaccine for one or more of these reasons can now book their first dose using the National Booking Service. They will need to contact their local GP practice to arrange a second dose.

1. **Why should a child get the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Getting the vaccine will help to protect children and young people against COVID-19. Whilst most children usually have mild illness, they can pass on their infection to others in their family and those they come into contact with. Getting vaccinated will also help to reduce the chance of disruption to their education from COVID-19. This is an important decision and there's further information [available online](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-resources-for-children-and-young-people/covid-19-vaccination-a-guide-for-eligible-children-and-young-people-aged-12-to-17).

1. **Is there a risk of a child having an allergic reaction to the vaccine?**

As part of the process, every child will be taken through a set of screening questions designed to pick up any conditions that may need special consideration before vaccination. Before any vaccination appointment, it would be helpful for children and their parents to consider what is likely to be asked, and some pre-screening questions to help do this are available online [here](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Ctim.readman%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CMicrosoft%5CWindows%5CINetCache%5CContent.Outlook%5CB23PZSXY%5Cbit.ly%5Cvaccine-checklist).

1. **Will a child be able to book a COVID-19 vaccine if they are within a few weeks of their 12th birthday?**

No children under the age of 12 can yet receive a COVID-19 vaccination. The only vaccine legally licensed for children is for those aged 12 and above, meaning that only children who are 12 on or before the date of vaccination can be vaccinated.

1. **Is the vaccine at local NBS sites the same as the one offered in schools?**

Yes, there is one vaccine licensed in the UK for school-aged children (Pfizer-BioNTech) and it will be exactly the same in schools or at local NHS services.

1. **Who provides consent for a child to get a vaccine out of school, and how?**

Parents and those with parental responsibilities are strongly encouraged to attend vaccine appointments with their child to go through consent and screening questions on site (in line with the approach set out in the [Green Book](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consent-the-green-book-chapter-2)). If the parent is not present and the child is not deemed to be able to consent, it is likely that the child will be asked to come back with a parent or guardian at a later date.

Some children may be sufficiently mature to provide their own consent if they express a wish to have a vaccine. Trained professionals with expertise in vaccinating children and assessing consent will speak to the child to assess intelligence, competence and understanding to appreciate fully what's involved, to determine appropriateness of administering the vaccine.

For vaccinations in schools, a consent form will continue to be provided in advance and should be returned before the session.

1. **What information will be given to ensure informed consent can be given?**

Pre-consenting materials, including a copy of a patient information leaflet with factual information about the COVID-19 vaccine, will be shared with families along with the letters inviting them to book an appointment. Further information can be found at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-resources-for-schools](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-resources-for-schools) and [www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-resources-for-children-and-young-people](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-resources-for-children-and-young-people), and a consent form is at [www.gov.uk/government/publications//covid-19-vaccination-consent-form-for-children-and-young-people-or-parents](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications//covid-19-vaccination-consent-form-for-children-and-young-people-or-parents).

1. **If a child gets the COVID-19 vaccine, does this mean they are protected against flu as well?**

No – they are two separate vaccinations and a child would need to get both for maximum protection.

But the good news is that it has never been easier to get the flu jab – this year, the school aged flu vaccine has also been extended so that as well as children in primary school and year 7, it will now be offered to those in years 8 to 11.

So most secondary school aged children will be eligible for both flu and COVID-19 vaccinations this winter, to protect themselves and those around them. We hope that as many as possible will come forward to get both vaccinations when they are invited.

1. **What is the role of schools?**

Schools continue to have a really important role in the vaccination of school-aged children against COVID-19. They will continue to provide information on which children on their roll are eligible for the vaccine, to provide a venue for vaccination to take place, and to share information about the vaccine, helping children and their parents to understand the benefits and effects of the vaccine.

1. **Are vaccines safe for children?**

On 4 June 2021, the UK’s independent medicines regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), concluded a positive safety profile for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in children aged 12-15.

This follows a stringent and rigorous review of the safety, quality, and effectiveness of the vaccine in this age group by the MHRA and the Government’s expert independent advisory body, the Commission on Human Medicines.

1. **When will public facing communication materials be available?**

This information is regularly updated at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-resources-for-children-and-young-people](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-resources-for-children-and-young-people).