

**COVID-19 vaccine
Children under 5
July 21, 2022 – Q&As**

1. Why should parents and caregivers get their children aged six months to under five years vaccinated? Previous reports indicated that children who got infected with COVID-19 typically experienced mild symptoms.

Not all children have only mild symptoms. Vaccination is the preferred and safest method to provide additional protection for all children, including those aged six months to under five years. Having children vaccinated also provides further protection to their family members, especially if they have family members who are at risk for more severe illness.

Even if a child has already had COVID-19, vaccination is still important. While infection alone provides some protection, vaccination after infection helps further improve the immune response. Studies in adults show that vaccination following infection provides stronger and longer-lasting protection. Vaccination remains one of the most effective ways for individuals to protect themselves, their families and their communities against severe outcomes from COVID-19.

2. Will children aged six months to under five years receive the same dosage of the vaccine as children aged five to 11? What is the dose interval for this age group?

No. The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine for children aged six months to under five years is a two-dose series given at least eight weeks apart. This paediatric Moderna vaccine is a lower dose than the paediatric Moderna vaccine used for children aged six to 11, as younger children need a lower dose of the vaccine to get the same protection from COVID-19.

3. Have the long-term side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine for children been determined?

COVID-19 vaccines, like all medicines, can cause side effects, although not everyone gets them. The most frequently reported short-term side effects for children following the COVID-19 vaccine include redness and pain at injection site, fatigue, headache, chills, muscle aches and loss of appetite. These side effects are typically mild to moderate and on average did not last longer than three days.

Following any vaccine, the vast majority of severe reactions occur within six weeks of receiving the vaccine.

In the clinical trials, children were monitored up to 103 days after receiving their first dose of vaccine and no safety signals were identified.

The benefits of getting vaccinated and being protected against COVID-19 far outweigh the risks of any side effects from the vaccine. COVID-19 infection may cause longer-lasting symptoms and health problems for some people, including children, which is why it's important that children get vaccinated as soon as possible.

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4. Are children who are not yet six months old able to be booked to receive the paediatric COVID-19 vaccine for a later date?

Parents and caregivers can schedule an appointment for their children who are not yet six months old for a later date. Children must be at least six months or older at the time of their appointment in order to receive the paediatric COVID-19 vaccine.

5. Will parents and caregivers need to book second dose appointments for their child?

Individuals who use the [COVID-19 vaccination portal](#) or the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre can book their child's second dose appointment after they have received their first dose, at a recommended interval of eight weeks, or minimum interval of 28 days.

Individuals whose child receives their vaccine at a pharmacy administering this vaccine should discuss with the pharmacy location about booking second doses. Primary care providers will work with parents and caregivers whose children they vaccinate to book a second dose appointment.

To provide the strongest possible protection, NACI recommends waiting eight weeks between the first and second dose. This is based on evidence that suggest longer intervals between doses results in a stronger immune response and higher vaccine effectiveness that is expected to last longer. This interval may also be associated with a lower risk of myocarditis and/or pericarditis.

6. Will parents and caregivers receive proof that their child is vaccinated?

Vaccine certificates with QR codes will be available to download from the [COVID-19 vaccination portal](#) and notification will be sent to the contact email, if provided, when the record of vaccination is available to parents or guardians for children aged six months to under five years.

7. Will parents or caregivers need to provide consent for their children aged six months to under five years to get vaccinated?

The COVID-19 vaccine is voluntary for everyone eligible in the province. In Ontario, the *Health Care Consent Act* sets out certain rules on when consent is needed for treatment and how it must be obtained.

Parents or legal guardians of children aged six months to under five years need to provide informed consent on behalf of the child before or at the time of the appointment. This means that they must understand what the vaccine involves (for example, how it is administered), why it is recommended, and the potential risks and benefits.

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8. Where can parents and caregivers receive more information?

Parents with questions are encouraged to:

- speak with their health care provider,
- call the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at 1-833-943-3900, or
- visit the COVID19 Vaccine Consult Service to book a phone appointment with a SickKids Registered Nurse: sickkids.ca/vaccineconsult.