

COVID-19 vaccination for at risk 5 to 11-year-olds – Stakeholder toolkit

Background

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has advised that 5 to 11-year-olds who are either in a clinical risk group or are a household contact of someone of any age who is immunosuppressed should be offered two 10 micrograms doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, with a minimum interval of eight weeks between doses.

This means around half a million children will soon be invited to take up their vaccination.

The JCVI has set out criteria for determining who should be offered vaccination within this group and clinicians will be responsible for identifying children in their care who are eligible. Parents will need to give consent for their child to be vaccinated.

Information on eligibility can be found in the [Green Book, chapter 14a](#), which is published by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA). See the section on children aged 5-11 years and tables 3 and 4.

How will I know if my child is eligible?

GPs and hospital specialists have been asked to identify 5 to 11-year-olds who are eligible for COVID-19 vaccination.

For children eligible as a household contact, the person who is immunosuppressed will be written to directly.

Parents and guardians will be notified if their child should get the vaccine and told how they can book an appointment.

The NHS will be in touch with parents in the coming weeks if their child is eligible, so please wait to hear and do not contact your GP practice.

Where will children be given their vaccine?

Vaccination services have been asked to make preparations to vaccinate this cohort and consider necessary reasonable adjustments to accommodate their needs on an individual basis, to ensure children and their families have a positive experience.

It is expected that most children will be vaccinated at a site run by local GPs, a hospital or a specialist children's centre. In cases where this isn't possible, local arrangements will be in place with community pharmacies, vaccination centres, hospital hubs, housebound teams and in some cases at special schools.

Parents or guardians will also be able to take their child to a walk-in appointment, however it's important to be aware that not every site will be able to offer vaccination for this group, so please use our online walk-in site finder (www.nhs.uk/vaccine-walk-in) to make sure you choose the right site. If this is the preferred option, when attending the appointment, you will need to remember to take the letter from your child's GP or hospital consultant confirming their eligibility for the vaccine.

Please be aware that parents cannot currently book their child's vaccination appointment by calling 119 or on the NHS website.

Q&A

What are the eligibility criteria for the clinical risk group for 5 to 11-year-olds?

A clinician will determine whether or not a child within this age group should be offered COVID-19 vaccination. Children considered at higher risk of severe COVID-19 include those who have:

- chronic respiratory disease
- chronic heart conditions
- chronic conditions of the kidney, liver or digestive system
- chronic neurological disease
- severe, profound or multiple learning disabilities, Down's syndrome or are on the learning disability register
- endocrine disorders
- a weakened immune system due to a treatment (such as steroid medicine, biological therapy, chemotherapy or radiotherapy)
- asplenia or dysfunction of the spleen
- serious genetic irregularities that affect a number of systems, including mitochondrial disease and chromosomal abnormalities

Children who are about to receive planned immunosuppressive therapy should be considered for vaccination prior to commencing therapy.

A full list of the eligibility criteria is available in table 4 of the [Green Book, chapter 14a](#).

What are the eligibility criteria for 5 to 11-year-olds classed as a household contact of someone who is immunosuppressed?

Children aged 5 to 11 years who are expected to share living accommodation on most days (and therefore for whom continuing close contact is unavoidable) with individuals of any age who are immunosuppressed will be entitled to COVID-19 vaccination.

Are the COVID-19 vaccines for 5 to 11-year-olds the same as those used for adults?

The preferred option for children in this cohort is the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine (Comirnaty®) 10 micrograms dose concentrate, which is a formulation for children aged 5 to 11. However, it is recognised that in exceptional circumstances, and where it is in the best interests of the patient, clinicians may decide to vaccinate children and young people under the age of 12 with a smaller volume of the adult version of the vaccine (a fractionated dose).

What adjustments are being made to support children with additional needs attending vaccination appointments?

Our standards require sites to allocate more time for vaccinating children. If a child will require any reasonable adjustments at their vaccination appointment to support attendance and delivery of the vaccination, parents should make any requirements needed known when they are booking the appointment on behalf of their child. It is important services are aware of any appropriate arrangements needed in advance.

What safeguarding measures are the NHS putting in place?

Additional safeguarding standards will be in place for staff involved in vaccinating this age group. All the clinical staff working in the centre are required to have an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check. In addition, all staff (excluding stewards) must have additional bespoke training.

Will vaccination staff be offered special training?

A number of additional resources have been prepared to assist providers in preparing the workforce and the environment for young children. All staff involved in vaccinating 5 to 11-year-olds will have appropriate training specific to communicating with and vaccinating this age group. For staff vaccinating children with special educational needs and disabilities, all clinical staff are required to have the skill and competences to care for this group of patients.

Will vaccination appointments be available at flexible times to fit around families' work and school commitments?

Vaccination sites should ensure a range of times are available which are convenient to parents and children.

Can vaccination be provided with a nasal spray like with flu?

No, the COVID-19 vaccine is currently only available as an injection.

What happens if my local GP has opted out of giving vaccines to this age group?

GPs who aren't providing vaccinations to this age group have been asked to identify all eligible patients on their lists and ensure they receive an invitation for vaccination at another local site.

Working together to support children to get vaccinated

As children are invited to come forward for their vaccination, we are seeking support from stakeholders to raise awareness among your communities about how anyone eligible can get vaccinated.

There are a number of ways you can help:

1. Upload the first section of this toolkit to your website to let families know who is eligible and how children can get their vaccine
2. Share messaging on social media
3. Include updates in bulletins and e-newsletters
4. If you operate a helpline, ensure staff and volunteers have access to key information