

COVID-19 vaccination for ages under five

Reviewed by SickKids Staff | Last updated: August 11th 2022

Learn about the status of the COVID-19 vaccine for children under five years of age and the benefits of getting the vaccine for this age group.

Looking for general information on COVID-19 vaccines. Visit the page on [COVID-19 vaccines general information](#).

Looking for information specific to children aged five to 11? Visit the page on [COVID-19 vaccine information for children \(ages five to 11\)](#).

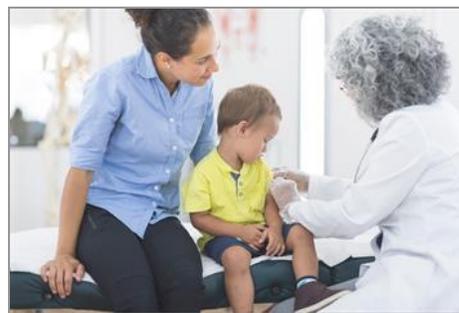
Looking for information specific to youth age 12+? Visit the page on [COVID-19 vaccine information for youth \(ages 12+\)](#).

Key points

- Health Canada has authorized Moderna's Spikevax for use as a two-dose primary series in children six months to five years of age, and a three-dose primary vaccine series in those who are moderately to severely immunocompromised.
- Vaccination is recommended ahead of the start of the school year and upcoming respiratory virus season.
- Neonates are more at risk of hospital admission because they have an immature immune system that has difficulty combatting disease.
- Infants under six months of age can receive protection through immunization of the parent during pregnancy and subsequently through breastfeeding (more information for this age group is available later in the article).

Is there a COVID-19 vaccine available for children under five years of age?

Yes. On July 14, 2022, Health Canada authorized Moderna's Spikevax for use as a two-dose primary series in children six months to five years of age, and a three-dose primary vaccine series in those who are moderately to severely immunocompromised. "Primary vaccine series" refers to the initial number of doses of a particular vaccine that a person needs. It does not include booster dose(s).



This is the first COVID-19 vaccine authorized in Canada for use in children under the age of five years.

What do we know about the Moderna vaccine?

Clinical trial findings show that Moderna's vaccine, which is 25 micrograms (half the dose given to the age six to 11 group), produces an immune response in children under five equal to the immune response seen in young adults 18 to 25 years of age who receive the 100-microgram dose primary series. Preliminary efficacy of the vaccine in preventing symptomatic COVID-19 when Omicron is the dominant variant is estimated at 50.6 per cent in children six to 23 months of age and 36.8 per cent in children two to five years of age starting 14 days after the second dose.

[More information is available in this summary document](#) from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization.

What are the side effects of the vaccine?

In the clinical trial, 4,792 children aged between six months to five years of age received the vaccine. Side effects were similar to those seen with other vaccines given at that age, including irritability or crying, pain at the injection site, sleepiness, and loss of appetite.

Should I be concerned about myocarditis side effects in this age group?

In the vaccine trial for children under 6 years of age, there were no reported incidents of myocarditis. Cases of myocarditis and pericarditis have been seen extremely rarely in children aged five to 11 years of age, and thus the risk for younger children is anticipated to be low. There are multiple surveillance mechanisms in place in order to monitor any potential post-vaccination risk of these conditions over time in younger children.

Is there another vaccine for this age group currently under review by Health Canada?

Yes, a vaccine developed by Pfizer is currently under review by Health Canada and a decision is expected in the coming weeks to months.

Should I wait for the Pfizer vaccine?

If you have decided to vaccinate your child, the first vaccine that is available is the best option to provide protection as soon as possible.

What is the risk to children under five years old from COVID-19?

With the spread of the Omicron variant, there have been more cases of children under age five in hospital with COVID-19 than earlier in the pandemic.

Children who have had COVID-19 are at risk of experiencing multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C), a rare but serious complication that usually requires hospitalization. Although children with an underlying medical condition are at higher risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19, this can still occur in children who were previously healthy. Severe disease and MIS-C can occur in any child, whether they have an underlying condition or not.

Further, all Individuals can help protect vulnerable members of their family, including children and youth, by ensuring that they and everyone around them are vaccinated against COVID-19.

Read the full [Advisory Committee Statement](#) from NACI for more information.

Why vaccinate my child if COVID-19 has already infected most of my household members?

Many people are getting COVID-19 more than once. Studies in adults, which bode well for children, show that vaccination following infection provides stronger and longer-lasting protection from COVID-19 than infection alone. In addition, vaccination may provide further protection ahead of the start of the school year and upcoming respiratory virus season.

Can my child receive the COVID-19 vaccine at the same time as another vaccine?

Vaccinating children against a multitude of diseases is an important way to keep them healthy; however, for now, NACI recommends vaccination against COVID-19 either 14 days before or after a different vaccine. Please ensure your child remains [up to date with all their vaccinations](#).

If I've recently had a booster dose of the vaccine and am currently breastfeeding, is it safe for my baby to be vaccinated?

Yes. The antibodies from breast milk do not interfere with the immunity acquired from the vaccine, which will provide additional protection. Breastfeeding is not a contra-indication to receiving vaccines in infants who can receive them. There is no need to delay or time the vaccination differently.

If my child is five years old, should they get the Moderna vaccine approved for ages six months to five years, or the Pfizer vaccine approved for ages five to 11 years?

For children aged five years and above, it's recommended that they receive the Pfizer vaccine approved for the five to 11 age group. Children aged six months to under five are recommended to receive the Moderna vaccine for this age group for both doses of the primary series.

Infants less than 6 months of age

Is there a vaccine for infants under six months of age?

No. A vaccine for this age group would require clinical studies to determine the safety and benefits of vaccination. However, babies can receive protection through immunization of the parent during pregnancy and subsequently through breastfeeding.

How can I protect my unborn baby from COVID-19?

Neonates are more at risk of hospital admission because they have an [immature immune system that has difficulty combatting disease](#). If you are pregnant, vaccination is the best way to protect your baby from COVID-19. Vaccination enables you to pass on immunity to your baby while also protecting yourself.

Does this immunity offer protection after the baby is born?

Yes, it is well-recognized in other infectious diseases, such as flu and whooping cough (pertussis), that antibodies resulting from vaccination in a pregnant person provide protection for the first six months of an infant's life. Multiple studies, including this [from the U.S. CDC](#),

have also shown that infants born to those who are vaccinated have more antibodies against COVID-19 and are less likely to be admitted to the hospital with COVID-19. If the pregnant person has not been vaccinated or infected, the baby does not have the protection of antibodies transferred from the parent during the third trimester of pregnancy.

Are there any risks or benefits to being vaccinated if I am breastfeeding?

[Studies have shown](#) that there are no risks from receiving a COVID-19 vaccine in individuals who are breastfeeding. Studies have also shown that vaccinated individuals who are breastfeeding pass along antibodies in their breast milk, which may confer additional protection against COVID-19 to their child.

If I have additional questions, who can I speak with to get the answers?

Make an appointment with the [SickKids COVID-19 Vaccine Consult Service](#) to have a one-on-one phone appointment with a SickKids expert.

Please visit [AboutKidsHealth.ca](https://www.aboutkidshealth.ca) for more child health information.

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