
Covid-19 and flu vaccination for 12 to 15-year-olds

Why is my child being offered the Covid-19 vaccine?

The vaccination helps to protect people against Covid-19. The government's Chief Medical Officers have advised that all children aged 12 to 15 should be offered one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine to help protect them and others against the virus and help reduce disruption to their education.

Why are all secondary school aged children being offered the flu vaccine as well this winter?

The flu vaccination programme already includes all children in primary schools and is being expanded this year to include older children. This significant expansion in the school immunisation programme is part of the government's wider winter planning to reduce flu levels in the population, and therefore the potential impact on the NHS, when we are likely to see both flu and coronavirus (Covid-19) in circulation.

Are the vaccines compulsory?

Vaccination is a choice and for children the choice should be agreed between parents and the child.

No child will be vaccinated within a school setting without consent from their parent or carer.

Parents/carers will be sent a link to an online consent portal. The consent portal has separate consent forms for the flu and Covid-19 vaccines and parents/carers will be asked whether or not they agree to their child having each vaccine. Paper copies of the consent forms will also be available.

Children will not be excluded from school or activities if they do not have either or both vaccines.

Why are they only being offered one dose?

For most children and young people Covid-19 is usually a milder illness that rarely leads to complications. Given the lower risk of illness for this age group, current national guidance is one dose for this age group gives a good level of protection for the child, their family and friends.

If a second dose is recommended in future, parents/carers will be asked to complete another consent form.

Is it dangerous to have both vaccines at the same time?

There is no evidence that having both the Covid-19 and flu vaccine at the same time poses any increased risk. The flu vaccine is administered using a nasal spray, while the Covid-19 vaccine will be given with an injection to the child's upper arm.

When, where and how will the vaccines be given?

Vaccinations for 12 to 15-year-olds in schools has started in special schools during the week commencing 20 September. It will then begin at secondary schools in the week of 27 September. Children and young people aged 12 to 15 who are unable to attend a school setting when the clinic is being run will be invited to have their vaccine in a community clinic.

The vaccines will be administered by staff from Sirona Health & Care, which runs the Schools Immunisation Service in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.

In our area, children aged 12 to 15 will be given the Pfizer (also known as Comirnaty) vaccine and they will be given one dose.

It is expected that the vaccination programme for 12 to 15-year-olds in this area will be completed by Christmas.

When will parents find out the date of the vaccination clinic in their child's school?

Schools will contact families approximately five days before their vaccination clinic takes place with information about both the flu vaccine and Covid-19 vaccine and links to the consent forms.

The short timeframe is to reduce the chance of children developing Covid-19 between consent being given and the vaccinations taking place. Children with Covid-19 symptoms cannot be vaccinated and should have a PCR test and self-isolate until they have the results. If their test is positive, they can have the Covid-19 vaccine at a community clinic 28 days after developing symptoms.

What happens if my child is unwell on the day of the vaccination clinic at their school?

A series of community clinics will be held for 12 to 15 year olds. Anyone who is unable to attend the vaccination session at their school will be able to have the Covid-19 and/or flu in one of these clinics. Information about community clinics, along with a booking link, will be sent to schools to distribute to their families.

What if someone objects to the intranasal flu vaccine (LAIV) on grounds of porcine gelatine content?

If a parent/carer or child objects to having the flu vaccine on the grounds of the porcine gelatine content, an alternative flu vaccine will be offered via the School Immunisation Service. This would be given by an injection to the upper arm at a community clinic.

What happens if I don't want my child to have the vaccine but my child does?

No child will be vaccinated within a school setting without consent from their parent or carer.

If a child aged 12 to 15 states that they would like to have the Covid-19 vaccination and their parent/carer has refused consent or not replied to the consent request, a phone call will be made to the parent/carer to discuss consent. If a parent or carer will not give consent, and the child wishes to have the vaccine, the child and parent will be invited to a clinic to discuss their circumstances with a clinician.

Legally, children under the age of 16 can consent to their own treatment if they're believed

to have enough intelligence, competence and understanding to fully appreciate what's involved in their treatment. This is known as being Gillick competent¹.

My child is at secondary school but only aged 11, will they be offered a vaccine?

Your son or daughter will be offered the flu vaccine. Children under the age of 12 are currently not being offered the Covid-19 vaccine but will be able to attend a community clinic if they turn 12 after the vaccine has been delivered in their school.

My child had a false negative result and was vaccinated when they were positive with Covid - should I be worried?

There is no known risk from vaccination too soon after Covid infection and the advised four week gap is simply a precautionary measure.

- Further information and guidance on the Covid-19 vaccine for young people is available here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-resources-for-schools/covid-19-vaccination-programme-for-young-people-guidance-for-parents>
- Further information about the flu vaccine for children is here <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/child-flu-vaccine/>
- Local information and support is available on our website www.southglos.gov.uk/coronavirus

¹ <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-protection-system/gillick-competence-fraser-guidelines#heading-top>