

COVID-19 Vaccine and Children with Medical Complexity (CMC) Frequently Asked Questions

Children ages 5 to 11 who live or go to school in Massachusetts are now eligible to get the Pfizer vaccine. The vaccine is safe, effective, and free. You don't need identification or insurance to get it.

In general, are COVID-19 vaccines safe for children with medical complexity (CMC)?

Yes. The data shows that the Pfizer vaccine is just as safe and effective for children and adolescents as it is for young adults. Unexpected reactions to the shot are very rare.

As with any vaccine, parents of children with medical complexity should talk to their child's doctor about getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

What were the medical profiles of the children who participated in the COVID-19 vaccine trials?

The number of children with complex medical needs or rare diseases who participated in the trials is unknown. However, numerous systems are in place to monitor vaccine side effects among the millions of children who have already received COVID-19 vaccine in the US. Side effects are very rare.

Should caregivers wait to vaccinate until more studies have been done?

Current evidence suggests that children with medical complexity can be at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Conditions which contribute to medical complexity do not, in general, cause unexpected reactions to COVID-19 vaccination. For these reasons, caregivers should not wait to vaccinate their children against COVID-19. If you have specific questions about your child's medical condition and getting the vaccine, talk with your child's doctor.

Are there any concerns about vaccinating a child who relies on specific medications to manage a medically complex condition?

Medications are highly unlikely to increase any risks associated with vaccination. Certain drugs that suppress the body's immune system or treat autoimmune disorders may reduce the effectiveness of the vaccine. Talk with your child's doctor if you have questions about medications and COVID-19 vaccine.

What is the risk of myocarditis (inflammation of the heart) for children with medical complexity?

Overall, the risk of side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine is very low in children. There have been rare cases of myocarditis in adolescent males which have been linked to COVID-19 vaccination. However, there is no known association between underlying medical conditions and the development of myocarditis after getting the vaccine. In fact, the risk of developing myocarditis due to COVID-19 infection is much higher than developing myocarditis after getting the vaccine.

My child is 11 1/2. Should we wait until my child turns 12 to get the full dose rather than the pediatric dose?

You should get a COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 5 years and older as soon as you can. Children who will turn from 11 to 12 years of age between their first and second dose can receive either the pediatric or the full dose. If you have more questions about this, talk to your child's doctor.

My child is 10 but weighs as much as a 12-year-old. Can my child get the full dose rather than the pediatric dose?

Unlike many medications, the COVID-19 vaccine dosage your child receives is based on their age on the day of vaccination, not how much they weigh.

Why are there different doses for younger children compared to older children and why is the cut off at 11/12?

Because young children are still growing and developing, researchers assessed the need for different doses of vaccines already used for adolescents and adults. As a result, children ages 5 through 11 years will receive an age-appropriate dose of the Pfizer vaccine that is one-third the dose that adolescents and adults receive. The dosage was determined in clinical trials with children in these age groups.

Will there be other pediatric vaccines available, in addition to Pfizer?

At this time, the only federally authorized vaccine for children aged 5-11 is the Pfizer vaccine.

How can I get my homebound child vaccinated safely?

You may request an in-home vaccination for children and youth with special health care needs ages 5 and above by visiting the COVID-19 In Home Vaccination Program at www.mass.gov/InHomeVaccine. You can also call the In-Home Vaccination Central Intake Line at (833) 983-0485. Please let the Intake Line know that you have a child with special health care needs, as well as any other special considerations. Intake Line representatives are available in both English and Spanish and have access to translators for over 100 languages.

Are there disability-friendly vaccination clinics available for my child?

Yes. You can learn more about disability-friendly vaccination events across Massachusetts at www.VaxAbilities.com. These clinics will offer appointments with extra time and staff to provide skilled support to people with disabilities and/or sensory support needs.

For general information on vaccinating children ages 5-11, please visit:

www.mass.gov/CovidVaccineKids

For information on vaccinating people ages 12-17, please visit:

www.mass.gov/CovidVaccineYouth

