

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: VACCINES FOR 12+

WHY GET VACCINATED?

COVID-19 infection can have serious consequences for all age groups, including young people, particularly given the circulation of new variants of concern. We encourage all residents who are eligible to get a vaccine, but we understand parents, caregivers and adolescents may have questions.

This is an important health decision and we encourage you to have discussions with your children and youth about the benefits and risks of getting vaccinated.

Vaccinating all who are eligible, including youth, will help to reduce the number of cases of COVID-19 in our community and allow youth to get back to the activities they enjoy. For more information please visit york.ca/COVID19vaccineinfo

IS THE PFIZER-BIONTECH COVID-19 VACCINE SAFE FOR MY CHILD?

All [vaccines for COVID-19](#) authorized for use in Canada have been evaluated by Health Canada, using rigorous standards. Health Canada will continue to monitor all vaccines to ensure they are safe and effective.

Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is the first COVID-19 vaccine to [be authorized by Health Canada](#) for use in adolescents. The vaccine was initially authorized for use in people 16 years of age and older [on December 9, 2020](#). After completing a thorough and independent scientific review of the evidence, Health Canada has determined this vaccine is safe and effective at preventing COVID-19 when used in children between 12 and 15 years of age.

HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE VACCINE?

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has been demonstrated to be highly effective at protecting against COVID-19 for individuals 12 and over. The Pfizer-BioNTech clinical trial studied 2,260 youth aged 12 to 15 years old in the United States. In the trial, there were 18 cases of COVID-19 in the group that did not get the vaccine (the “placebo” group) compared to zero cases in the vaccinated group. Based on these results, the vaccine was calculated to be 100% effective in the trial.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE-EFFECTS OF THE VACCINE?

Vaccinating children protects them from getting sick and reduces virus spread within their household and the community.

PUBLIC HEALTH

1-877-464-9675
TTY 1-866-512-6228
york.ca/COVID19Vaccine



Side-effects after vaccination are often part of the body's natural response to a vaccine. Side-effects are usually mild and temporary, only lasting for a few hours or days. The clinical trial showed adolescents 12 to 15 years of age experienced similar side-effects as adults after both the first and second dose. Side-effects are usually not serious and do not last long.

Side-effects within 7 days after both dose 1 and dose 2 can include:

- pain at the injection site
- fatigue
- headache
- chills
- muscle pain
- fever
- joint pain
- injection site redness
- swollen lymph nodes
- nausea

York Region Public Health is closely monitoring reports of potential cases of myocarditis or pericarditis in individuals following a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine. Most cases occur in teens and young adult males after the second dose of vaccine. Monitor for signs and symptoms and seek medical attention immediately if you experience chest pain, trouble breathing or irregular heartbeat after vaccination.

DO I HAVE TO MONITOR MY CHILD AFTER THEY HAVE THE VACCINE?

Following vaccination, your child or youth will be asked to sit in an observation area for 15 minutes to allow public health to monitor them for any adverse effects.

You can also check in with them periodically after their vaccine to see if they are experiencing any of the common cause side-effects, or if they experience any signs or symptoms of myocarditis and/or pericarditis such as shortness of breath, chest pain or the feeling of a rapid or abnormal heart rhythm.

Serious side-effects after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine are rare; however, if your child is severely unwell call 911 and seek medical attention right away, or if they develop any of the following adverse reactions after receiving the vaccine:

- Hives
- Swelling of face or mouth
- Trouble breathing
- Very pale colour and serious drowsiness
- High fever (over 40°C)
- Convulsions or seizures
- Other serious symptoms

DO I NEED TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT REPORTS OF MYOCARDITIS AND PERICARDITIS?

The [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) (PHAC), Health Canada and Public Health Ontario (PHO) are closely monitoring rare reports of potential myocarditis or pericarditis following a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine, including those among youth.

A small number of cases of myocarditis and/or pericarditis following immunization with mRNA COVID-19 vaccines have been reported in Canada and internationally. Internationally, cases have been reported more frequently in adolescents and younger adults under 30 years of age, more often in males than in females and more frequently after a second dose. Most cases have been mild, and individuals have recovered quickly.

The association of myocarditis and pericarditis with mRNA vaccination has not yet been confirmed and the possible mechanism for causing inflammation remains under investigation. NACI continues to strongly recommend a complete series with an mRNA vaccine should be offered to all eligible individuals, including those 12 years of age and older. mRNA COVID-19 vaccines provide very good protection against SARS-CoV-2 infection and symptomatic COVID-19 disease, including severe illness, hospitalization and death. The benefits of the COVID-19 immunization program continue to outweigh the relatively small risk for all people including adolescents.

As a precaution, NACI recommends individuals who experienced myocarditis and/or pericarditis after a first dose of an mRNA vaccine should wait to get their second dose until more information is available. To see the full update, please visit [NACI Recommendations on the use of COVID-19 Vaccines](#).

WHAT ARE MYOCARDITIS AND PERICARDITIS, AND HOW ARE THEY TREATED?

Myocarditis and pericarditis involve inflammation of the heart muscle or the sack in which it sits in the chest, respectively, in response to an infection or some other trigger.

Symptoms can include:

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- The feeling of a rapid or abnormal heart rhythm (fast, pounding or fluttering)

All suspected cases of post-vaccine myocarditis or pericarditis should be assessed by a physician for an in-person evaluation.

Treatment depends on the severity of the case. Mild cases may be treated with nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as Ibuprofen/Advil for relief of symptoms.

Moderate to severe cases may require further treatments, as recommended by an attending physician.

The currently available data shows that potential myocarditis and pericarditis after vaccination is usually a mild disease that is self-resolving; however, **anyone developing symptoms of myocarditis or pericarditis should see their doctor.**

York Region Public Health closely monitors COVID-19 vaccine safety alongside federal and provincial public health agencies to ensure vaccines continue to be safe.

DOES MY CHILD NEED MY CONSENT TO GET THE VACCINE?

York Region Public Health's current policy requires parental consent for the COVID-19 vaccine for 12 and 13-year-old children. Parents are still heavily involved in the health-care decisions of children in this age group and would typically accompany the child to the appointment.

For this age group, parents may have a better understanding of the child's medical history, allergies, and any recent immunizations. Children in this age group may not have the capacity to understand all the necessary elements of informed consent as it relates to this newer vaccine (e.g. how the vaccine works, benefits and risks of obtaining the vaccine, potential risks of not obtaining the vaccine).

If a parent or legal guardian is unable to accompany their 12 and/or 13-year-old child to the appointment, they can complete and sign a [consent form](#) and send it with the child to the appointment.

All parents and guardians are encouraged to speak to their children and youth about the COVID-19 vaccine, including the risks and benefits of getting vaccinated, regardless of age.

HOW DO I BOOK AN APPOINTMENT?

To book an appointment or for more information on clinic locations and appointment availability please visit york.ca/COVID19Vaccine. Most clinics offer vaccines by appointment only; do not visit a clinic site without scheduled appointment unless the clinic is currently offering walk-ins.

Please bring the following to your appointment:

- Ontario Health Card (OHIP) if you have one
- Photo ID and any example that shows you live in York Region
- A face mask or covering and wear a loose-fitting shirt that allows easy access to your upper arm

Additional information on how to prepare for your appointment and videos of what to expect at the clinic are available at york.ca/COVID19VaccineBeforeYouGo

CAN MY CHILD STILL GET COVID-19 AFTER BEING VACCINATED?

There is still a chance you can contract COVID-19 after being vaccinated and it is currently unknown if you can transmit the virus after being immunized. We do know it takes approximately two weeks after getting vaccinated to be protected. One vaccine dose is effective against getting seriously sick.

You are not considered fully vaccinated until you have had two doses. It is important to continue to follow public health measures such as physical distancing, wearing a mask, staying home if unwell and washing your hands frequently. Studies are ongoing to determine the long-term protection of COVID-19 vaccines.

DOES MY CHILD HAVE TO BE 12 OR CAN THEY BE TURNING 12 THIS YEAR?

Individuals must be age 12 at the time of vaccination. Eligibility for this group is not based on the year of birth due to manufacturer requirements from Pfizer-BioNTech.

MY CHILD IS AFRAID OF NEEDLES, WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP THEM?

Every effort is being made to reduce anxiety and vaccine-related fears for this age group. You can help by having discussions with your children about the benefits and risks of getting vaccinated and about what they can expect.

A parent or guardian can accompany a child to their appointment. Consider bringing items such as headphones, earphones and tablets to increase comfort at the clinic.

WHAT IF MY CHILD HAS A DISABILITY AND MAY NOT BE COMFORTABLE AT A LARGE CLINIC?

A support person can accompany anyone with a disability to a mass vaccination clinic, if needed. Additionally, most mass vaccination sites will accommodate clients who need to be immunized in their vehicle with an in-car vaccination and observation period. If you have any difficulty booking, you can call Access York at 1-877-464-9675.

Individuals are also welcomed to bring any items that may increase their comfort at the clinic such as headphones, earphones and tablets.

We are committed to our ongoing work with partners to ensure people with disabilities can receive the accommodations needed to get a vaccine safely and comfortably.

To help prepare your child or youth for their appointment you can watch the [What to expect](#) video available at york.ca/COVID19Vaccine

WHAT IF MY CHILD HAS ALLERGIES?

If your child has experienced a less severe allergic reaction to a previous dose or a component of the [Pfizer-BioNTech](#) you must talk to your health care provider before your child receives the vaccine and you are required to bring a letter from your health care provider indicating the vaccine can be safely administered.

If your child has experienced a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to an ingredient of, or previous dose of, the [Pfizer-BioNTech](#), vaccine, they will not be able to receive their vaccine at a York Region clinic and should not receive a second dose without consulting with your health care provider.

The Pfizer vaccine does not contain eggs, gelatin (pork), gluten, latex, preservatives, antibiotics or aluminum. **Detailed vaccine ingredient lists can be found at** canada.ca/COVID19

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT WOULD PREVENT MY CHILD OR YOUTH GETTING A VACCINE?

The vaccine is safe for most youth, including those with a health condition such as diabetes or a weak immune system.

Delay vaccination if your child has a fever or COVID-19 symptoms, are confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19, or have received a flu shot or other vaccine in the past 14 days.

A consultation with your health care provider **is recommended but not required** before receiving the vaccine if you:

- Have a weak immune system from an illness or therapy, or an autoimmune condition
- Are pregnant or breastfeeding

WHEN SHOULD MY CHILD GET THEIR SECOND DOSE?

Anyone 12+ who lives, works or goes to school in York Region is eligible to book a second dose 28 days after the first dose.

It is important to receive your second dose as soon as you are able. The COVID-19 vaccine takes up to two weeks after your second dose to provide maximize protection against COVID-19 and potential variants of concern. Visit york.ca/COVID19Vaccine

WILL PROOF OF COVID-19 VACCINES BE MANDATORY TO ATTEND SCHOOL IN-PERSON?

Provinces and territories are responsible for determining school vaccination policies, including the reporting of vaccination status. Some provinces and territories require mandatory reporting of vaccinations for school entry, to increase the ability of public health officials to respond during an outbreak. Currently, COVID-19 vaccination is not listed under mandatory reporting for school entry. Additional information on vaccines and schools in Ontario can be found on the Government of Ontario's [Vaccines for children at school](#) web page.

As more information becomes available it will be posted at [york.ca/COVID19Vaccine](#) and [york.ca/SafeAtSchool](#). We encourage you to check [york.ca/COVID19](#) regularly for reliable up-to date information.

CAN WE RETURN TO NORMAL ACTIVITIES ONCE MY CHILD HAS THEIR VACCINE?

You must continue to follow all public health measures even after getting vaccinated:

- Practice physical distancing
- Wear a mask when required
- Wash your hands frequently
- Stay home if you are unwell

Public health measures remain the foundation of the pandemic response while vaccines continue to roll out across the country. It is important that everyone, regardless of vaccination status, continue to follow recommended public health measures.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

Visit [york.ca/COVID19Vaccine](#) for more information and to book your appointment.