



**COVID Vaccine**  
North East and North Cumbria

Provided by  
The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

Dear parents / guardian

Healthy children aged 12-15 are being given the opportunity to have a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccination announced by the four UK nations chief medical officers.

Children in years 7 – 11 are also eligible this year to have a flu vaccination.

Local School Aged Immunisation Services (SAIS), commissioned by NHS England and Improvement, are responsible for delivering both flu and COVID-19 vaccination to this age group (and flu vaccination only for a wider range of primary school aged children) within the school setting.

For the 2021 autumn term, this represents a significant increase in the number of vaccinations of both flu and COVID-19 being delivered, quickly, by SAIS teams.

In recognition of this situation, the regional COVID-19 Vaccination Programme, hosted by Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, will work with the SAIS teams to offer vaccinations to schools where pupils may have missed an opportunity for COVID-19 vaccination thus far.

Parental consent to vaccinate your child in school is required in advance for both flu and COVID-19 vaccinations. We know that some of you may have already given your consent for the COVID-19 vaccination. This is now being provided by Newcastle Hospitals, so we are legally required to ask you to consent to them as new providers to deliver the COVID-19 vaccination for your child.

We recognise that this may be frustrating as you have already filled in consent, however we are asking for your cooperation to provide this consent again if you wish your child to get the COVID-19 vaccination.

Both school aged immunisation services and the regional COVID-19 vaccination programme will continue to work closely with schools and partners in local authorities to ensure as many children as possible can be vaccinated.

Many thanks

The COVID-19 Regional vaccination programme for the North East and North Cumbria

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

We know that you are likely to have questions about receiving the vaccine, so we hope these frequently asked questions will be helpful. There are also a couple of videos from our visit to a school in Newcastle you may like to watch.

### **Why should you have your child vaccinated?**

The UK's Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) all agree that while COVID-19 is typically mild or asymptomatic in most young people, it can be very unpleasant for some and 1 dose of the vaccine will provide good protection against severe illness and hospitalisation.

Vaccinating 12- to 15-year-olds should also help to reduce the need for young people to have time-off school and reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 within schools.

The COVID-19 secondary schools vaccine programme should therefore provide protection to young people and reduce the disruption to face to face education. This will help to keep young people emotionally well and happier and this was an important consideration for the CMOs.

### **The COVID-19 vaccine**

The COVID-19 vaccine helps to reduce the chance of COVID-19 infection and provides good protection against serious disease. It may take a few weeks to build up some protection from the first dose of vaccine.

### **Is it safe for young people?**

The medicines regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), has confirmed the Pfizer vaccine is safe and effective for 12 to 17 year olds. This followed a rigorous review of the safety, quality and effectiveness of the vaccines in this age group.

The UK has also benefited from having data from the US, Canada and Israel, which have already offered vaccines universally to young people aged 12 to 15 years.

These 2 videos from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) explain this in more detail:

[video 1](#) – right click open hyperlink (Search YouTube Vaccines Q & A with DR Nighat Arif) and

[video 2](#) right click open hyperlink (Search YouTube: Dr Alex Bowmer - COVID-19 Vaccine Q&A)

### **How were the vaccines developed so quickly?**

All vaccines have had 3 stages of clinical trials and were tested on tens of thousands of people around the world. The trial phases were run in parallel, speeding up the overall time of vaccine production, but not the critical research time.

Since December 2020 the Pfizer vaccine has been given to millions of people in the UK and has an excellent safety record.

These 2 videos from DHSC explain this in more detail: [video 3](#) and [video 4](#).

### **How the consent process works**

All parents, or those with parental responsibility, are asked for consent and will usually make this decision jointly with their children. [The information leaflet](#) is addressed to the child (as the recipient of the vaccine) and encourages them to discuss the decision about the vaccine with their parents.

In secondary schools, some young people may be mature enough to provide their own consent. This sometimes occurs if a parent has not returned a consent form but the child still wishes to have the vaccine on the day of the session.

For other vaccination programmes such as flu and HPV in secondary schools, there is a well established process. This is when healthcare professionals from the schools immunisation team will speak to the young person and make every effort to contact the parent. These professionals have expertise in vaccinating young people and will be responsible for assessing whether they have enough understanding to self-consent (this is called 'Gillick competence').

However, for COVID-19 school vaccination, only children who have had written consent from their parents in advance will be vaccinated.

### **Why do I need to provide consent again?**

To provide vaccination services you need to be a registered healthcare provider. The additional team coming in is from another healthcare organisation therefore legally consent needs to be re provided to Newcastle Hospitals

### **Do I need to know my child's NHS Number?**

It's helpful if you do, but don't worry if you don't have it

### **What is happening with a vaccine passport for my child?**

At the moment U16's vaccinations do not appear on the COVID-19 vaccine passport this is likely to change in the future

### **Why can't I take my child to the GP or a vaccination centre for their vaccinations?**

Currently the safest way to have your child vaccinated is within school, however this may change in the future.

### **Will my child need a second vaccine?**

Currently children are just being offered a first dose. As we learn more about COVID-19 and how it responds to the vaccine, there may be future doses given to groups of young people.

### **Can parents refuse to have their child vaccinated?**

Yes. The vaccine is not mandatory. Parents will be asked to give their consent for the vaccine. Parents should be encouraged to speak to their children ahead of time so that there is agreement on consent in advance of the vaccination session.

### **Is it safe to have flu and COVID vaccines at the same time?**

Yes. Public Health England advises that there are no safety concerns and that COVID-19 vaccines can be given at the same time as other vaccines, including the nasal flu vaccine. It is standard practice for different vaccines to be given at the same time as each other. This happens frequently with routine childhood vaccinations in the UK and other countries.

### **Common side effects**

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. Most of these are mild and short-term and not everyone gets them. The very common side effects should only last a day or 2.

Very common side effects in the first day or 2 include:

- having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection
- feeling tired
- headache, aches and chills
- young people may also have flu-like symptoms with episodes of shivering and shaking for a day or 2
- We suggest that young people should rest and take paracetamol (following the dose advice in the packaging) to help make them feel better.

### **Very rare serious side effects**

Worldwide, there have been recent, very rare cases of inflammation of the heart called myocarditis or pericarditis reported after COVID-19 vaccines. Most of these people felt better following rest and simple treatments.

These cases have been seen mostly in younger males and mainly occurred within a few days of the second dose; myocarditis is extremely rare after the first dose of the vaccine.

### **Will your child be observed after vaccination?**

Serious allergic reactions to vaccination are very rare but tend to happen within a few minutes of the injection. School age immunisation service teams are all trained

to spot and manage allergic reactions and so all children will be observed for 15 minutes.

There will be the necessary equipment to treat an allergic reaction.

Children with allergies to common food items are not at higher risk of these serious allergies.

**Your child is home educated and does not attend school, will they be offered a vaccine as part of this programme?**

All young people in the eligible age group who do not attend school, for example those who are home educated or living in secure accommodation, should be offered the vaccine. The school age immunisation service provider will have plans in place to offer vaccines to these young people.

**Your child is over 12 years old but in a further education college, not at school, will they be offered a vaccine as part of this programme?**

Yes. All children in the eligible age group who do not attend school should be offered the vaccine. The school age immunisation service provider will have plans in place to offer vaccination to these children.

**Your child is in a special school, will they be offered a vaccine as part of this programme?**

Yes. School age immunisation service providers are commissioned to vaccinate children in special schools.

**Can a 12 to 15 year old use a COVID-19 walk-in site if this would be quicker?**

Unfortunately, walk-ins from this age group cannot be accepted. Presently there are no plans to make walk-in appointments available.

**Where you can you more information on the COVID-19 vaccine**

The [NHS leaflets](#) provide more information for parents and young people on the vaccine, including how it works and what to expect after COVID-19 vaccination. There are accessible versions of the consent form and leaflets available for those with a learning disability or who live with autism. There are braille and British Sign Language (BSL) videos to order or download. Translations are also available.

**What will happen in school when my child goes for their vaccination?**

- Pupils talk about receiving their vaccine in school (search on YouTube 'Excelsior Academy - Pupils voices')

- COVID-19 Vaccinations at Excelsior Academy in Newcastle – the Principal James Andriot talks about how it has been in his school ( search on Newcastle Hospitals YouTube ‘ Excelsior Principal’)