

FACT-CINATION

Know the facts about the vax

Get the information you need to help support your COVID-19 vaccination decision

This information guide has been produced to help point young people and their parents to reliable sources of information regarding the COVID-19 vaccination now it is being offered to 12 to 15 year olds. Where you see blue text followed by a  icon, this is a link that you can click on to find out more.

How does a vaccine work?

Vaccines are medicines that can prepare the body to fight off different bacteria or viruses (microbes). They contain small parts of microbes (usually made in the lab, but sometimes dead/inactive parts of microbes are used). Newer vaccines (mRNA vaccines and the viral vector vaccines) contain the instructions to make part of the microbe.

When you are vaccinated, these parts of the microbe trigger your immune system to produce antibodies. Antibodies stick to the surface of the microbe and kill or disable them. Once antibodies have been made, they remain in the bloodstream for a period of time, so if the same bacteria or virus invades the body again, the immune response will be quicker and the infection will be less severe.

Vaccines also help the body remember the microbe for the future via the cells that are part of the immune system (called "immunological memory").

 [Vaccines and immunisation: What is vaccination? \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int)

 [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccines - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

What will the vaccine do?



It's likely that for most people **vaccination** against COVID-19 will induce **more effective** and **longer lasting immunity** than that induced by natural infection with the virus.

Even if you've had COVID-19, you're recommended to get the vaccine because it will **boost** whatever immunity you have from natural infection. ([The British Society for Immunology](#)). 

If you are vaccinated, you may still catch the virus, but you will be likely to have **mild** or **no symptoms** and you are **less likely** to pass the virus on to other people.

Is it safe for young people?

The UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) confirmed in June 2021 that the Pfizer vaccine is **safe** and **effective** for 12 to 17 year olds. The age group is recommended to get a single dose.

As with all vaccines, there is a chance of side effects. Not everyone gets them, and if they do, they are mild and only last a couple of days.

Side effects can include:

- a sore arm from the injection
- feeling tired
- a headache
- feeling achy
- feeling or being sick

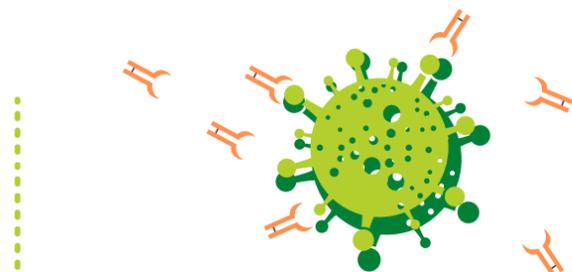
There have been reports of serious side effects such as allergic reactions, blood clots or mild cases of heart inflammation, called myocarditis, in adolescents and young adults. These are extremely rare, and the complications are more common with COVID-19 infection than as the result of a vaccination.

 [Watch Sonia from the NHS Youth Forum ask about the safety of the vaccine](#) 

How do you report side effects?

The MHRA requests that all suspected side effects from COVID-19 vaccines are reported via the dedicated coronavirus [Yellow Card site](#). 

The purpose of the Yellow Card Scheme is to provide an early warning that the safety profile of a product requires further investigation.



How has the vaccine been developed so quickly?

Developing a vaccine can be a slow process, taking around 10 years to develop a new vaccine from scratch. The urgent need across the world for COVID-19 vaccines allowed these to be developed much more quickly.

- Scientists **shared information** around the world, using research already carried out looking at outbreaks of other viruses
- There was **existing research** looking at the development of vaccines against other coronaviruses
- Large amounts of **funding** was made available from governments
- Scientists were able to begin manufacture of vaccines **at the same time** as the on-going trial phases
- Finally, there was a **huge response** from people who were willing to be participants in the vaccine trials

All the COVID-19 vaccines have now been used in **hundreds of millions of people globally**, so there is **more information** available for these vaccines than many others used for a longer time.

 [Public Health expert Dr Alex Bowmer explains how the COVID-19 vaccine has been developed so quickly](#) 

 [BBC News: How does a vaccine get approved?](#) 

 [Hear from a vaccine trial participant](#) 

What is the benefit to young people of COVID-19 vaccines?

In early September 2021, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) met to decide whether to recommend vaccinations for 12-15 yr olds.

Overall, the committee concluded that the **benefits from vaccination were marginally greater than the potential known harms**, but felt that small benefit alone wasn't enough to recommend a national vaccination programme for 12-15yr olds. However, they made clear that they could only consider the clinical benefits, and couldn't consider other areas such as education and suggested the Government should seek further advice from the UK Chief Medical Officers (CMOs).

On 13 September 2021, the CMOs concluded that along with the clinical benefit of the vaccine, vaccinating young people would also help to stop the spread of the virus in schools, and therefore **reduce the risk of further disruption to young people's education**.

Their recommendation to the government was to begin a roll-out of the vaccination programme to 12 to 15yrs olds.

Read the JCVI recommendation [here](#) 

Read the CMO's recommendation [here](#) 

 [BBC News: What difference will jabbing young teens make](#)

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LifeLab is supported by the National Institute for Health Research Southampton Biomedical Research Centre. The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the NIHR.

The LifeLab team produces educational programmes and resources to enable young people to understand the health messages they receive through their own scientific discovery.

Find out more about us at lifelabonline.org

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Why are vaccinations happening in schools?

Schools are simply being used as convenient locations. From the beginning of the autumn term, the local School Age Immunisation Service (SAIS) will start arranging for the vaccinations in schools.

Like all other school-based vaccination programmes, the vaccines will be administered by healthcare staff working closely with schools and following the usual approach for regular school-based immunisations.



Do parents need to give consent?

Parents or guardians will be asked to give consent in the same way as for other vaccinations, e.g. HPV vaccine.

Young people can legally give their own consent if they can show they fully understand what is involved in the vaccination procedure.

This is known as 'Gillick' competence and parents cannot overrule the decision of a Gillick competent child.

Why is it still important we continue to test regularly?

A vaccinated person will have a less severe illness, but could still catch and carry the virus. So, even after being vaccinated, it is really important to keep thinking about your choices to keep yourself and your families and communities safe. So, **keep testing regularly** and **self-isolate if positive**.

Where can I get more information?

There is a lot of information out there and a lot of misinformation online. This is particularly true on social media, with false information aimed at young people. To assess whether you can trust the information you are reading you should use the **CLUED UP*** check list:

- **C**redible – Does the content come from a **trusted/reliable source** that you'd reasonably expect to be an authority on the subject?
- **L**ogical – Does the content seem like it is **realistic**? If a piece of content seems to be unrealistic and doesn't provide any evidence, you should consider carefully whether it is **factual** and real.
- **U**nemotional – Does the content appeal to your sense of reason, or does it **play on your emotions**? If we are shocked or scared by what we are reading, it leads us to ignore any doubts we may have about the credibility of the content.
- **E**videnced – Does the information **provide sources or evidence** to back up the claims that it makes?
- **i**dentifiable – Is the information definitely coming from the organisation or individual that you think it is? The rise of bots and fake accounts, provides individuals with an opportunity to **spread disinformation** by **pretending to be a credible source**. Check the profile or bio of an individual or organisation producing content, to look for signs that they are who they claim to be.
- **U**p-to-date – Has the information been **published or updated recently**. We are still learning things about COVID-19, so make sure you have the most up-to-date information.
- **P**urpose – Does the individual or organisation publishing the information have a **motive** for doing so other than simply telling the truth? Are they trying to **persuade** you to believe a particular point of view?



More sources of information

- [COVID-19 Vaccines - Oxford Vaccine Group](#) 
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Misinformation Toolkit | DCMS \(dcmsblog.uk\)](#) 
- [Coronavirus: False vaccine claims debunked \(BBC\)](#) 
- [Meet the scientists tackling vaccine misinformation on TikTok](#) 
- [Public Health Expert Dr Alex Bowmer answers questions about COVID-19 vaccine](#) 

Fact check



Can the vaccine affect fertility?

There is absolutely no evidence, and no theoretical reason, that any of the vaccines can affect the fertility of women or men. ([The British Fertility Society](#)) 

Does the vaccine contain animal products?

The vaccines do not contain anything of animal origin.

Here are some more FAQs from NHS sites across the UK, who have produced answers for young people:

- [COVID-19 Vaccinations Frequently Asked Questions - Hampshire](#) 
- [COVID-19 Vaccinations FAQs - Norfolk](#) 
- [COVID-19 Vaccinations FAQs - Northern Ireland](#) 
- [COVID-19 Vaccinations FAQs - Wales](#) 

*CLUED UP Resource from the [Royal Society for Public Health](#) 

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