



November 2021

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

COVID-19 mRNA Vaccines for Children

What vaccine will children aged 5 to 11 years get?

Health Canada has approved the Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for children aged 5 to 11 years.

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How does the Pfizer BioNTech mRNA vaccine work?

Traditional vaccines put a weakened or inactivated virus into our bodies. However, messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA) vaccines like the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine teach cells how to make a protein that triggers an immune response if someone is infected with COVID-19.^{2,4} When the vaccine is injected into our arm, the mRNA enters cells near the site of the injection and tells the cells to start making the same protein that is found in the COVID-19 virus.^{2,3} The immune system recognizes this protein and starts making antibodies that can fight the virus if the vaccinated person is later infected.^{3,4} The vaccine does NOT expose you to the virus that causes COVID-19, and does not get into our genetic material or DNA.

How effective is the vaccine at protecting children from COVID-19?

In vaccine trials, children had a strong immune system response to the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine.⁵ The vaccine was 90.7% effective at preventing COVID-19 in children 5 to 11 years old, and offered protection from getting sick with the Delta variant.⁵

Is messenger RNA (mRNA) technology safe?

Yes. Scientists have been studying mRNA for decades. One reason the COVID-19 vaccines were made so quickly is because governments, scientists, public health authorities and manufacturers around the world worked together and made them a priority.^{4,6,7} Like all new vaccines, the mRNA COVID-19 vaccines had to go through a very specific and scientifically strict process of testing and review (including clinical trials) to make sure they are safe and effective.^{4,5,7} Strong vaccine safety systems have been developed to monitor for rare vaccine side effects. In October 2021, more than 1.4 billion doses of Pfizer BioNTech vaccine has been safely delivered around the world. The Pfizer BioNTech vaccine has also

What are the common side effects of mRNA COVID vaccines in children?

As with other vaccines, it is normal and expected to experience side effects. Common side effects are a sore or red arm, tiredness, chills, and muscle/joint pain.^{5,13} Many children in the trials had mild side effects after getting the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine. Side effects usually go away within three days.^{5,13}

What are the serious side effects of mRNA COVID vaccines in children?

No new serious side effects were seen in the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine trials for children. Serious side effects, like anaphylaxis (a severe allergy), after mRNA COVID vaccines are rare.^{7,14} For every 1 million Pfizer doses given to people aged 12 and older, there are two cases of anaphylaxis.^{7,14}

Is COVID-19 vaccination safe for people with a medical condition or allergies?

Individuals taking medications that weaken their immune system or those with allergies to any of the vaccine ingredients should consult with their health care provider. However, people who have medical conditions are often at higher risk of becoming more ill if they are infected with COVID-19 and are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated as soon as possible. COVID-19 vaccines do not contain eggs, gelatin (pork), gluten, latex, preservatives, antibiotics or aluminum. Children with allergies to foods, drugs, insect stings, or other vaccines can safely get mRNA COVID-19 vaccines.³

What are the benefits of COVID-19 vaccination for children?

- Vaccines will protect children from getting sick with this virus
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